

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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A TALE OF TWO CITIES.

In Three Books.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

CHAPTER XV. THE FOOTSTEPS DIE OUT FOR EVER.

ALONG the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh. Six tumbrils carry the day's wine to La Guillotine. All the devouring and insatiate Monsters imagined since imagination could record itself, are fused in the one realisation, Guillotine. And yet there is not in France, with its rich variety of soil and climate, a blade, a leaf, a root, a sprig, a peppercorn, which will grow to maturity under conditions more certain than those that have produced this horror. Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious licence and oppression ever again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind.

Six tumbrils roll along the streets. Change these back again to what they were, thou powerful enchanter, Time, and they shall be seen to be the carriages of absolute monarchs, the equipages of feudal nobles, the toilettes of flaring Jezabels, the churches that are not my father's house but dens of thieves, the huts of millions of starving peasants! No; the great magician who majestically works out the appointed order of the Creator, never reverses his transformations. "If thou be changed into this shape by the will of God," say the seers to the enchanted, in the wise Arabian stories, "then remain so! But, if thou wear this form through mere passing conjuration, then resume thy former aspect!" Changeless and hopeless, the tumbrils roll along.

As the sombre wheels of the six carts go round, they seem to plough up a long crooked furrow among the populace in the streets. Ridges of faces are thrown to this side and to that, and the ploughs go steadily onward. So used are the regular inhabitants of the houses to the spectacle, that in many windows there are no people, and in some the occupations of the hands is not so much as suspended, while the eyes survey the faces in the tumbrils. Here and there, the inmate has visitors to see the sight; then he points his finger, with some-

thing of the complacency of a curator or authorised exponent, to this cart and to this, and seems to tell who sat here yesterday, and who there the day before.

Of the riders in the tumbrils, some observe these things, and all things on their last roadside, with an impassive stare; others, with a lingering interest in the ways of life and men. Some, seated with drooping heads, are sunk in silent despair; again, there are some so heedful of their looks that they cast upon the multitude such glances as they have seen in theatres, and in pictures. Several close their eyes, and think, or try to get their straying thoughts together. Only one, and he a miserable creature of a crazed aspect, is so shattered and made drunk by horror that he sings, and tries to dance. Not one of the whole number appeals, by look or gesture, to the pity of the people.

There is a guard of sundry horsemen riding abreast of the tumbrils, and faces are often turned up to some of them and they are asked some question. It would seem to be always the same question, for, it is always followed by a press of people towards the third cart. The horsemen abreast of that cart, frequently point out one man in it with their swords. The leading curiosity is, to know which is he; he stands at the back of the tumbril with his head bent down, to converse with a mere girl who sits on the side of the cart, and holds his hand. He has no curiosity or care for the scene about him, and always speaks to the girl. Here and there in the long Street of St. Honoré, cries are raised against him. If they move him at all, it is only to a quiet smile, as he shakes his hair a little more loosely about his face. He cannot easily touch his face, his arms being bound.

On the steps of a church, awaiting the coming-up of the tumbrils, stands the Spy and prison-sheep. He looks into the first of them: not there. He looks into the second: not there. He already asks himself, "Has he sacrificed me?" when his face clears, as he looks into the third.

"Which is Evrémonde?" says a man behind him.

"That. At the back there."

"With his hand in the girl's?"

"Yes."

The man cries "Down, Evrémonde! To the guillotine all aristocrats! Down, Evrémonde!"

"Hush, hush!" the Spy entreats him, timidly.

"And why not, citizen?"

"He is going to pay the forfeit; it will be paid in five minutes more. Let him be at peace."

But, the man continuing to exclaim, "Down, Evrémonte!" the face of Evrémonte is for a moment turned towards him. Evrémonte then sees the Spy, and looks attentively at him, and goes his way.

The clocks are on the stroke of three, and the furrow ploughed among the populace is turning round, to come on into the place of execution, and end. The ridges thrown to this side and to that, now crumble in and close behind the last plough as it passes on, for all are following to the Guillotine. In front of it, seated in chairs as in a garden of public diversion, are a number of women, busily knitting. On one of the foremost chairs, stands The Vengeance, looking about for her friend.

"Thérèse!" she cries, in her shrill tones.

"Who has seen her? Thérèse Defarge!"

"She never missed before," says a knitting-woman of the sisterhood.

"No; nor will she miss now," cries The Vengeance, petulantly. "Thérèse."

"Louder," the woman recommends.

Ay! Louder, Vengeance, much louder, and still she will scarcely hear thee. Louder yet, Vengeance, with a little oath or so added, and yet it will hardly bring her. Send other women up and down to seek her, lingering somewhere; and yet, although the messengers have done dread deeds, it is questionable whether of their own wills they will go far enough to find her!

"Bad Fortune!" cries The Vengeance, stamping her foot in the chair, "and here are the tumbrils! And Evrémonte will be despatched in a wink, and she not here! See her knitting in my hand, and her empty chair ready for her. I cry with vexation and disappointment!"

As The Vengeance descends from her elevation to do it, the tumbrils begin to discharge their loads. The ministers of Sainte Guillotine are robed and ready. Crash!—A head is held up, and the knitting-women who scarcely lifted their eyes to look at it a moment ago when it could think and speak, count One.

The second tumbril empties and moves on; the third comes up. Crash!—And the knitting women, never faltering or pausing in their work, count Two.

The supposed Evrémonte descends, and the seamstress is lifted out next after him. He has not relinquished her patient hand in getting out, but still holds it as he promised. He gently places her with her back to the crashing engine that constantly whirrs up and falls, and she looks into his face and thanks him.

"But for you, dear stranger, I should not be so composed, for I am naturally a poor little thing, faint of heart; nor should I have been able to raise my thoughts to Him who was put

to death, that we might have hope and comfort here to-day. I think you were sent to me by Heaven."

"Or you to me," says Sydney Carton. "Keep your eyes upon me, dear child, and mind no other object."

"I mind nothing while I hold your hand. I shall mind nothing when I let it go, if they are rapid."

"They will be rapid. Fear not!"

The two stand in the fast-thinning throng of victims, but they speak as if they were alone. Eye to eye, voice to voice, hand to hand, heart to heart, these two children of the Universal Mother, else so wide apart and differing, have come together on the dark highway, to repair home together and to rest in her bosom.

"Brave and generous friend, will you let me ask you one last question? I am very ignorant, and it troubles me—just a little."

"Tell me what it is."

"I have a cousin, an only relative and an orphan, like myself, whom I love very dearly. She is five years younger than I, and she lives in a farmer's house in the south country. Poverty parted us, and she knows nothing of my fate—for I cannot write—and if I could, how should I tell her! It is better as it is."

"Yes, yes: better as it is."

"What I have been thinking as we came along, and what I am still thinking now, as I look into your kind strong face which gives me so much support, is this:—If the Republic really does good to the poor, and they come to be less hungry, and in all ways to suffer less, she may live a long time; she may even live to be old."

"What then, my gentle sister?"

"Do you think?" the uncomplaining eyes in which there is so much endurance, fill with tears, and the lips part a little more and tremble: "that it will seem long to me, while I wait for her in the better land where I trust both you and I will be mercifully sheltered?"

"It cannot be, my child; there is no Time there, and no trouble there."

"You comfort me so much! I am so ignorant. Am I to kiss you now? Is the moment come?"

"Yes."

She kisses his lips; he kisses hers; they solemnly bless each other. The spare hand does not tremble as he releases it; nothing worse than a sweet, bright constancy is in the patient face. She goes next before him—is gone; the knitting women count Twenty-Two.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

The murmuring of many voices, the upturning of many faces, the pressing on of many footsteps in the outskirts of the crowd, so that it swells forward in a mass, like one great heave of water, all flashes away. Twenty-Three.

They said of him, about the city that night,

that it was the peacefullest man's face ever beheld there. Many added that he looked sublime and prophetic.

One of the most remarkable sufferers by the same axe—a woman—had asked at the foot of the same scaffold, not long before, to be allowed to write down the thoughts that were inspiring her. If he had given any utterance to his, and they were prophetic, they would have been these:

"I see Barsad, and Cly, Defarge, The Vengeance, the Juryman, the Judge, long ranks of the new oppressors who have risen on the destruction of the old, perishing by this retributive instrument, before it shall cease out of its present use. I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out.

"I see the lives for which I lay down my life, peaceful, useful, prosperous and happy, in that England which I shall see no more. I see Her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name. I see her father, aged and bent, but otherwise restored, and faithful to all men in his healing office, and at peace. I see the good old man, so long their friend, in ten years' time enriching them with all he has, and passing tranquilly to his reward.

"I see that I hold a sanctuary in their hearts, and in the hearts of their descendants, generations hence. I see her, an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both.

"I see that child who lay upon her bosom and who bore my name, a man, winning his way up in that path of life which once was mine. I see him winning it so well, that my name is made illustrious there by the light of his. I see the blots I threw upon it, faded away. I see him, foremost of just judges and honoured men, bringing a boy of my name, with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place—then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement—and I hear him tell the child my story, with a tender and a faltering voice.

"It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known."

THE END.

We purpose always reserving the first place in these pages for a continuous original work of fiction, occupying about the same amount of time in its serial publication, as that which is just completed. The second story of our series

we now beg to introduce to the attention of our readers. It will pass, next week, into the station hitherto occupied by *A Tale of Two Cities*. And it is our hope and aim, while we work hard at every other department of our journal, to produce, in this one, some sustained works of imagination that may become a part of English Literature.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

PREAMBLE.

THIS is the story of what a Woman's patience can endure, and of what a Man's resolution can achieve.

If the machinery of the Law could be depended on to fathom every case of suspicion, and to conduct every process of inquiry, with moderate assistance only from the lubricating influences of oil of gold, the events which fill these pages might have claimed their share of the public attention in a Court of Justice.

But the Law is still, in certain inevitable cases, the pre-engaged servant of the long purse; and the story is left to be told, for the first time, in this place. As the Judge might once have heard it, so the Reader shall hear it now. No circumstance of importance, from the beginning to the end of the disclosure, shall be related on hearsay evidence. When the writer of these introductory lines (Walter Hartright, by name) happens to be more closely connected than others with the incidents to be recorded, he will describe them in his own person. When his experience fails, he will retire from the position of narrator; and his task will be continued, from the point at which he has left it off, by other persons who can speak to the circumstances under notice from their own knowledge, just as clearly and positively as he has spoken before them.

Thus, the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness—with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace the course of one complete series of events, by making the persons who have been most closely connected with them, at each successive stage, relate their own experience, word for word.

Let Walter Hartright, teacher of drawing, aged twenty-eight years, be heard first.

THE NARRATIVE OF WALTER HARTRIGHT, OF CLEMENT'S INN, LONDON.

I.

It was the last day of July. The long hot summer was drawing to a close; and we, the weary pilgrims of the London pavement, were beginning to think of the cloud-shadows on

the corn-fields, and the autumn breezes on the sea-shore.

For my own poor part, the fading summer left me out of health, out of spirits, and, if the truth must be told, out of money as well. During the past year, I had not managed my professional resources as carefully as usual; and my extravagance now limited me to the prospect of spending the autumn economically between my mother's cottage at Hampstead, and my own chambers in town.

The evening, I remember, was still and cloudy; the London air was at its heaviest; the distant hum of the street-traffic was at its faintest; the small pulse of the life within me and the great heart of the city around me seemed to be sinking in unison, languidly and more languidly, with the sinking sun. I roused myself from the book which I was dreaming over rather than reading, and left my chambers to meet the cool night air in the suburbs. It was one of the two evenings in every week which I was accustomed to spend with my mother and my sister. So I turned my steps northward, in the direction of Hampstead.

Events which I have yet to relate, make it necessary to mention in this place that my father had been dead some years at the period of which I am now writing; and that my sister Sarah, and I, were the sole survivors of a family of five children. My father was a drawing-master before me. His exertions had made him highly successful in his profession; and his affectionate anxiety to provide for the future of those who were dependent on his labours, had impelled him, from the time of his marriage, to devote to the insuring of his life a much larger portion of his income than most men consider it necessary to set aside for that purpose. Thanks to his admirable prudence and self-denial, my mother and sister were left, after his death, as independent of the world as they had been during his lifetime. I succeeded to his connexion, and had every reason to feel grateful for the prospect that awaited me at my starting in life.

The quiet twilight was still trembling on the topmost ridges of the heath; and the view of London below me had sunk into a black gulf in the shadow of the cloudy night, when I stood before the gate of my mother's cottage. I had hardly rung the bell, before the house-door was opened violently; my worthy Italian friend, Professor Pesca, appeared in the servant's place; and darted out joyously to receive me, with a shrill foreign parody on an English cheer.

On his own account, and, I must be allowed to add, on mine also, the Professor merits the honour of a formal introduction. Accident has made him the starting-point of the strange family story which it is the purpose of these pages to unfold.

I had first become acquainted with my Italian friend by meeting him at certain great houses, where he taught his own language and I taught

drawing. All I then knew of the history of his life was, that he had once held a situation in the University of Padua; that he had left Italy for political reasons (the nature of which he uniformly declined to mention to anyone); and that he had been for many years respectably established in London as a teacher of languages.

Without being actually a dwarf—for he was perfectly well-proportioned from head to foot—Pesca was, I think, the smallest human being I ever saw, out of a show-room. Remarkable anywhere, by his personal appearance, he was still further distinguished among the rank and file of mankind, by the harmless eccentricity of his character. The ruling idea of his life appeared to be, that he was bound to show his gratitude to the country which had afforded him an asylum and a means of subsistence, by doing his utmost to turn himself into an Englishman. Not content with paying the nation in general the compliment of invariably carrying an umbrella, and invariably wearing gaiters and a white hat, the Professor further aspired to become an Englishman in his habits and amusements, as well as in his personal appearance. Finding us distinguished, as a nation, by our love of athletic exercises, the little man, in the innocence of his heart, devoted himself impromptu to all our English sports and pastimes, whenever he had the opportunity of joining them; firmly persuaded that he could adopt our national amusements of the field, by an effort of will, precisely as he had adopted our national gaiters and our national white hat.

I had seen him risk his limbs blindly at a fox-hunt and in a cricket-field; and, soon afterwards, I saw him risk his life, just as blindly, in the sea at Brighton. We had met there accidentally, and were bathing together. If we had been engaged in any exercise peculiar to my own nation, I should, of course, have looked after Pesca carefully; but, as foreigners are generally quite as well able to take care of themselves in the water as Englishmen, it never occurred to me that the art of swimming might merely add one more to the list of manly exercises which the Professor believed that he could learn impromptu. Soon after we had both struck out from shore, I stopped, finding my friend did not gain on me, and turned round to look for him. To my horror and amazement, I saw nothing between me and the beach but two little white arms, which struggled for an instant above the surface of the water, and then disappeared from view. When I dived for him, the poor little man was lying quietly coiled up at the bottom, in a hollow of shingle, looking by many degrees smaller than I had ever seen him look before. During the few minutes that elapsed while I was taking him in, the air revived him, and he ascended the steps of the machine with my assistance. With the partial recovery of his animation came the return of his wonderful delusion on the subject of swimming. As soon as his chattering teeth would let him speak, he smiled vacantly, and said he thought it must have been the Cramp.

When he had thoroughly recovered himself and had joined me on the beach, his warm Southern nature broke through all artificial English restraints, in a moment. He overwhelmed me with the wildest expressions of affection—exclaimed passionately, in his exaggerated Italian way, that he would hold his life, henceforth, at my disposal—and declared that he should never be happy again, until he had found an opportunity of proving his gratitude by rendering me some service which I might remember, on my side, to the end of my days. I did my best to stop the torrent of his tears and protestations, by persisting in treating the whole adventure as a good subject for a joke; and succeeded at last, as I imagined, in lessening Pesca's overwhelming sense of obligation to me. Little did I think then—little did I think afterwards when our pleasant Brighton holiday had drawn to an end—that the opportunity of serving me for which my grateful companion so ardently longed, was soon to come; that he was eagerly to seize it on the instant; and that, by so doing, he was to turn the whole current of my existence into a new channel, and to alter me to myself almost past recognition.

Yet, so it was. If I had not dived for Professor Pesca, when he lay under water on his shingle bed, I should, in all human probability, never have been connected with the story which these pages will relate—I should never, perhaps, have heard even the name of the woman, who has lived in all my thoughts, who has possessed herself of all my energies, who has become the one guiding influence that now directs the purpose of my life.

II.

PESCA's face and manner, on the evening when we confronted each other at my mother's gate, were more than sufficient to inform me that something extraordinary had happened. It was quite useless, however, to ask him for an immediate explanation. I could only conjecture, while he was dragging me in by both hands, that (knowing my habits) he had come to the cottage to make sure of meeting me that night, and that he had some news to tell of an unusually agreeable kind.

We both bounced into the parlour in a highly abrupt and undignified manner. My mother sat by the open window, laughing and fanning herself. Pesca was one of her especial favourites; and his wildest eccentricities were always pardonable in her eyes. Poor dear soul! from the first moment when she found out that the little Professor was deeply and gratefully attached to her son, she opened her heart to him unreservedly, and took all his puzzling foreign peculiarities for granted, without so much as attempting to understand any one of them.

My sister Sarah, with all the advantages of youth, was, strangely enough, less pliable. She did full justice to Pesca's excellent qualities of heart; but she could not accept him implicitly, as my mother accepted him, for my sake. Her insular notions of propriety rose in perpetual

revolt against Pesca's constitutional contempt for appearances; and she was always more or less undisguisedly astonished at her mother's familiarity with the eccentric little foreigner. I have observed, not only in my sister's case, but in the instances of others, that we of the young generation are nothing like so hearty and so impulsive as some of our elders. I constantly see old people flushed and excited by the prospect of some anticipated pleasure which altogether fails to ruffle the tranquillity of their serene grandchildren. Are we, I wonder, quite such genuine boys and girls now as our seniors were, in their time? Has the great advance in education taken rather too long a stride; and are we, in these modern days, just the least trifle in the world too well brought up?

Without attempting to answer those questions decisively, I may at least record that I never saw my mother and my sister together in Pesca's society, without finding my mother much the younger woman of the two. On this occasion, for example, while the old lady was laughing heartily over the boyish manner in which we tumbled into the parlour, Sarah was perturbedly picking up the broken pieces of a teacup, which the Professor had knocked off the table in his precipitate advance to meet me at the door.

"I don't know what would have happened, Walter," said my mother, "if you had delayed much longer. Pesca has been half-mad with impatience; and I have been half-mad with curiosity. The Professor has brought some wonderful news with him, in which he says you are concerned; and he has cruelly refused to give us the smallest hint of it till his friend Walter appeared."

"Very provoking: it spoils the Set," murmured Sarah to herself, mournfully absorbed over the ruins of the broken cup.

While these words were being spoken, Pesca, happily and fussily unconscious of the irreparable wrong which the crockery had suffered at his hands, was dragging a large arm-chair to the opposite end of the room, so as to command us all three, in the character of a public speaker addressing an audience. Having turned the chair with its back towards us, he jumped into it on his knees, and excitedly addressed his small congregation of three from an impromptu pulpit.

"Now, my good dears," began Pesca (who always said "good dears," when he meant "worthy friends"), "listen to me. The time has come—I recite my good news—I speak at last."

"Hear, hear!" said my mother, humouring the joke.

"The next thing he will break, mamma," whispered Sarah, "will be the back of the best arm-chair."

"I go back into my life, and I address myself to the noblest of created beings," continued Pesca, vehemently apostrophising my unworthy self, over the top rail of the chair. "Who found me dead at the bottom of the sea (through Cramp); and who pulled me up to the top; and what did I

say when I got into my own life and my own clothes again?"

"Much more than was at all necessary," I answered, as doggedly as possible; for the least encouragement in connexion with this subject invariably let loose the Professor's emotions in a flood of tears.

"I said," persisted Pesca, "that my life belonged to my dear friend, Walter, for the rest of my days—and so it does. I said that I should never be happy again till I had found the opportunity of doing a good Something for Walter—and I have never been contented with myself till this most blessed day. Now," cried the enthusiastic little man at the top of his voice, "the overflowing happiness bursts out of me at every pore of my skin, like a perspiration; for on my faith, and soul, and honour, the Something is done at last, and the only word to say now, is—Right-all-right!"

It may be necessary to explain, here, that Pesca prided himself on being a perfect Englishman in his language, as well as in his dress, manners, and amusements. Having picked up a few of our most familiar colloquial expressions, he scattered them about over his conversation whenever they happened to occur to him, turning them, in his high relish for their sound and his general ignorance of their sense, into compound words and repetitions of his own, and always running them into each other, as if they consisted of one long syllable.

"Among the fine London houses where I teach the language of my native country," said the Professor, rushing into his long-deferred explanation without another word of preface, "there is one, mighty fine, in the big place called Portland. You all know where that is? Yes, yes—course-of-course. The fine house, my good dears, has got inside it a fine family. A Mamma, fair and fat; three young Misses, fair and fat; two young Masters, fair and fat; and a Papa, the fairest and the fattest of all, who is a mighty merchant, up to his eyes in gold—a fine man once, but seeing that he has got a naked head and two chins, fine no longer at the present time. Now mind! I teach the sublime Dante to the young Misses, and ah!—my-soul-bless-my-soul!—it is not in human language to say how the sublime Dante puzzles the pretty heads of all three! No matter—all in good time—and the more lessons the better for me. Now mind! Imagine to yourselves that I am teaching the young Misses to-day, as usual. We are all four of us down together in the Hell of Dante. At the Seventh Circle—but no matter for that: all the Circles are alike to the three young Misses, fair and fat,—at the Seventh Circle, nevertheless, my pupils are sticking fast; and I to set them going again, recite, explain, and blow myself up red-hot with useless enthusiasm, when—a creak of boots in the passage outside, and in comes the golden Papa, the mighty merchant with the naked head and the two chins.—Ha! my good dears, I am closer than you think for to the business, now. Have you been patient, so far? or have you said to yourselves, 'Deuce-

what-the-deuce! Pesca is long-winded to-night?'"

We declared that we were deeply interested. The Professor went on:

"In his hand, the golden Papa has a letter; and after he has made his excuse for disturbing us in our Infernal Region with the common mortal business of the house, he addresses himself to the three young Misses, and begins, as you English begin everything in this blessed world that you have to say, with a great O. 'O, my dears,' says the mighty merchant, 'I have got here a letter from my friend, Mr. —' (the name has slipped out of my mind; but no matter; we shall come back to that: yes, yes—right-all-right). So the Papa says, 'I have got a letter from my friend, the Mister; and he wants a recommend from me, of a drawing-master, to go down to his house in the country.' My-soul-bless-my-soul! when I heard the golden papa say those words, if I had been big enough to reach up to him, I should have put my arms round his neck, and pressed him to my bosom in a long and grateful hug! As it was, I only bounced upon my chair. My seat was on thorns, and my soul was on fire to speak; but I held my tongue, and let Papa go on. 'Perhaps you know,' says this good man of money, twiddling his friend's letter this way and that, in his golden fingers and thumbs, 'perhaps you know, my dears, of a drawing-master that I can recommend?' The three young Misses all look at each other, and then say (with the indispensable great O to begin) 'O, dear no, Papa! But here is Mr. Pesca—' At the mention of myself I can hold no longer—the thought of you, my good dears, mounts like blood to my head—I start from my seat, as if a spike had grown up from the ground through the bottom of my chair—I address myself to the mighty merchant, and I say (English phrase), 'Dear sir, I have the man! The first and foremost drawing-master of the world! Recommend him by the post to-night, and send him off, bag and baggage (English phrase again—ha?), send him off, bag and baggage, by the train to-morrow!' 'Stop, stop,' says the Papa, 'is he a foreigner or an Englishman?' 'English to the bone of his back,' I answer. 'Respectable?' says Papa. 'Sir,' I say (for this last question of his outrages me, and I have done being familiar with him), 'Sir! the immortal fire of genius burns in this Englishman's bosom, and, what is more, his father had it before him!' 'Never mind,' says the golden barbarian of a Papa, 'never mind about his genius, Mr. Pesca. We don't want genius in this country, unless it is accompanied by respectability—and then we are very glad to have it, very glad indeed. Can your friend produce testimonials—letters that speak to his character?' I wave my hand negligently. 'Letters?' I say. 'Ha! my-soul-bless-my-soul! I should think so, indeed! Volumes of letters and portfolios of testimonials, if you like?' 'One or two will do,' says this man of phlegm and money. 'Let him send them to me, with his name and address. And—stop,

stop, Mr. Pesca—before you go to your friend, you had better take a note.' 'Bank-note!' I say, indignantly. 'No bank-note, if you please, till my brave Englishman has earned it first.' 'Bank-note?' says Papa, in a great surprise, 'who talked of bank-note? I mean a note of the terms—a memorandum of what he is expected to do. Go on with your lesson, Mr. Pesca, and I will give you the necessary extract from my friend's letter.' Down sits the man of merchandise and money to his pen, ink, and paper; and down I go once again into the Hell of Dante, with my three young Misses after me. In ten minutes' time the note is written, and the boots of Papa are creaking themselves away in the passage outside. From that moment, on my faith, and soul, and honour, I know nothing more! The glorious thought that I have caught my opportunity at last, and that my grateful service for my dearest friend in the world is as good as done already, flies up into my head and makes me drunk. How I pull my young Misses and myself out of our Internal Region again, how my other business is done afterwards, how my little bit of dinner slides itself down my throat, I know no more than a man in the moon. Enough for me, that here I am, with the mighty merchant's note in my hand, as large as life, as hot as fire, and as happy as a king! Ha! ha! ha! right-right-right-all-right! Here the Professor waved the memorandum of terms over his head, and ended his long and voluble narrative with his shrill Italian parody on an English cheer.

My mother rose the moment he had done, with flushed cheeks and brightened eyes. She caught the little man warmly by both hands.

"My dear, good Pesca," she said, "I never doubted your true affection for Walter—but I am more than ever persuaded of it now!"

"I am sure we are very much obliged to Professor Pesca, for Walter's sake," added Sarah. She half rose, while she spoke, as if to approach the arm-chair, in her turn; but, observing that Pesca was rapturously kissing my mother's hands, looked serious, and resumed her seat. "If the familiar little man treats my mother in that way, how will he treat *me*?" Faces sometimes tell truth; and that was unquestionably the thought in Sarah's mind, as she sat down again.

Although I was myself gratefully sensible of the kindness of Pesca's motives, my spirits were hardly so much elevated as they ought to have been by the prospect of future employment now placed before me. When the Professor had quite done with my mother's hands, and when I had warmly thanked him for his interference on my behalf, I asked to be allowed to look at the note of terms which his respectable patron had drawn up for my inspection.

Pesca handed me the paper, with a triumphant flourish of the hand.

"Read!" said the little man, majestically. "I promise you, my friend, the writing of the golden Papa speaks with a tongue of trumpets for itself."

The note of terms was plain, straightforward, and comprehensive, at any rate. It informed me,

First, That Frederick Fairlie, Esquire, of Limmeridge House, Cumberland, wanted to engage the services of a thoroughly competent drawing-master, for a period of four months certain.

Secondly, That the duties which the master was expected to perform would be of a twofold kind. He was to superintend the instruction of two young ladies in the art of painting in water-colours; and he was to devote his leisure time, afterwards, to the business of arranging and mounting a valuable collection of drawings, which had been suffered to fall into a condition of total neglect.

Thirdly, That the terms offered to the person who should undertake and properly perform these duties, were four guineas a week; that he was to reside at Limmeridge House; and that he was to be treated there on the footing of a gentleman.

Fourthly, and lastly, That no person need think of applying for this situation, unless he could furnish the most unexceptionable references to character and abilities. The references were to be sent to Mr. Fairlie's friend in London, who was empowered to conclude all necessary arrangements. These instructions were followed by the name and address of Pesca's employer in Portland-place—and there the note, or memorandum, ended.

The prospect which this offer of an engagement held out was certainly an attractive one. The employment was likely to be both easy and agreeable; it was proposed to me at the autumn time of year when I was least occupied; and the terms, judging by my personal experience in my profession, were surprisingly liberal. I knew this; I knew that I ought to consider myself very fortunate if I succeeded in securing the offered employment—and yet, no sooner had I read the memorandum than I felt an inexpressible unwillingness within me to stir in the matter. I had never in the whole of my previous experience found my duty and my inclination so painfully and so unaccountably at variance as I found them now.

"Oh, Walter, your father never had such a chance as this!" said my mother, when she had read the note of terms and had handed it back to me.

"Such distinguished people to know," remarked Sarah, straightening herself in her chair; "and on such gratifying terms of equality, too!"

"Yes, yes; the terms, in every sense, are tempting enough," I replied, impatiently. "But, before I send in my testimonials, I should like a little time to consider—"

"Consider!" exclaimed my mother. "Why, Walter, what is the matter with you?"

"Consider!" echoed my sister. "What a very extraordinary thing to say, under the circumstances!"

"Consider!" chimed in the Professor.

"What is there to consider about? Answer me this! Have you not been complaining of your health, and have you not been longing for what you call a smack of the country breeze? Well! there in your hand is the paper that offers you perpetual choking mouthfuls of country breeze, for four months' time. Is it not so? Ha? Again—you want money. Well! Is four golden guineas a week nothing? My-soul-bless-my-soul! only give it to me—and my boots shall creak like the golden Papa's, with a sense of the overpowering richness of the man who walks in them! Four guineas a week, and, more than that, the charming society of two young Misses; and, more than that, your bed, your breakfast, your dinner, your gorging English teas and lunches and drinks of foaming beer, all for nothing—why, Walter, my dear good friend—deuce-what-the-deuce!—for the first time in my life I have not eyes enough in my head to look, and wonder at you!"

Neither my mother's evident astonishment at my behaviour, nor Pesca's fervid enumeration of the advantages offered to me by the new employment, had any effect in shaking my unreasonable disinclination to go to Limmeridge House. After starting all the petty objections that I could think of to going to Cumberland; and after hearing them answered, one after another, to my own complete discomfiture, I tried to set up a last obstacle by asking what was to become of my pupils in London, while I was teaching Mr. Fairlie's young ladies to sketch from nature. The obvious answer to this was that the greater part of them would be away on their autumn travels, and that the few who remained at home might be confided to the care of one of my brother drawing-masters, whose pupils I had once taken off his hands under similar circumstances. My sister reminded me that this gentleman had expressly placed his services at my disposal, during the present season, in case I wished to leave town; my mother seriously appealed to me not to let an idle caprice stand in the way of my own interests and my own health; and Pesca piteously entreated that I would not wound him to the heart, by rejecting the first grateful offer of service that he had been able to make to the friend who had saved his life.

The evident sincerity and affection which inspired these remonstrances would have influenced any man with an atom of good feeling in his composition. Though I could not conquer my own unaccountable perversity, I had at least virtue enough to be heartily ashamed of it, and to end the discussion pleasantly by giving way and promising to do all that was wanted of me. The rest of the evening passed merrily enough in humorous anticipations of my coming life with the two young ladies in Cumberland. Pesca, inspired by our national grog, which appeared to get into his head, in the most marvellous manner, five minutes after it had gone down his throat, asserted his claims to be considered a complete Englishman by making a series of speeches in rapid succession; proposing my mother's health, my sister's health, my health,

and the healths, in mass, of Mr. Fairlie and the two young Misses; pathetically returning thanks himself, immediately afterwards, for the whole party. "A secret, Walter," said my little friend, confidentially, as we walked home together. "I am flushed by the recollection of my own eloquence. My soul bursts itself with ambition. One of these days, I go into your noble Parliament. It is the dream of my whole life to be Honourable Pesca, M.P.!"

The next morning I sent my testimonials to the Professor's employer in Portland-place. Three days passed; and I concluded, with secret satisfaction, that my papers had not been found sufficiently explicit. On the fourth day, however, an answer came. It announced that Mr. Fairlie accepted my services, and requested me to start for Cumberland immediately. All the necessary instructions for my journey were carefully and clearly added in a postscript.

I made my arrangements, unwillingly enough, for leaving London early the next day. Towards evening Pesca looked in, on his way to a dinner-party, to bid me good-by.

"I shall dry my tears in your absence," said the Professor, gaily, "with this glorious thought. It is my auspicious hand that has given the first push to your fortune in the world. Go, my friend! When your sun shines in Cumberland (English proverb), in the name of Heaven, make your hay. Marry one of the two young Misses; inherit the fat lands of Fairlie; become Honourable Hartright, M.P.; and when you are on the top of the ladder, remember that Pesca, at the bottom, has done it all!"

I tried to laugh with my little friend over his parting jest, but my spirits were not to be commanded. Something jarred in me almost painfully, while he was speaking his light farewell words.

When I was left alone again, nothing remained to be done but to walk to the Hampstead Cottage and bid my mother and Sarah good-by.

III.

THE heat had been painfully oppressive all day; and it was now a close and sultry night.

My mother and sister had spoken so many last words, and had begged me to wait another five minutes so many times, that it was nearly midnight when the servant locked the garden-gate behind me. I walked forward a few paces on the shortest way back to London; then stopped, and hesitated.

The moon was full and broad in the dark blue starless sky; and the broken ground of the heath looked wild enough in the mysterious light to be hundreds of miles away from the great city that lay beneath it. The idea of descending any sooner than I could help into the heat and gloom of London repelled me. The prospect of going to bed in my airless chambers, and the prospect of gradual suffocation, seemed, in my present restless frame of mind and body, to be one and the same thing. I determined to stroll home in the purer air, by the most round-about way I could take; to follow the white

winding paths across the lonely heath; and to approach London through its most open suburb by striking into the Finchley-road, and so getting back, in the cool of the new morning, by the western side of the Regent's Park.

I wound my way down slowly over the Heath, enjoying the divine stillness of the scene, and admiring the soft alternations of light and shade as they followed each other over the broken ground on every side of me. So long as I was proceeding through this first and prettiest part of my night-walk, my mind remained passively open to the impressions produced by the view; and I thought but little on any subject—indeed, so far as my own sensations were concerned, I can hardly say that I thought at all.

But when I had left the Heath, and had turned into the by-road, where there was less to see, the ideas naturally engendered by the approaching change in my habits and occupations, gradually drew more and more of my attention exclusively to themselves. By the time I had arrived at the end of the road, I had become completely absorbed in my own fanciful visions of Limmeridge House, of Mr. Fairlie, and of the two ladies whose practice in the art of water-colour painting I was so soon to superintend.

I had now arrived at that particular point of my walk where four roads met—the road to Hampstead, along which I had returned; the road to Finchley; the road to West End; and the road back to London. I had mechanically turned in this latter direction, and was strolling along the lonely high-road—idly wondering, I remember, what the Cumberland young ladies would look like—when, in one moment, every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop by the touch of a hand laid lightly and suddenly on my shoulder from behind me.

I turned on the instant, with my fingers tightening round the handle of my stick.

There, in the middle of the broad, bright high-road—there, as if it had that moment sprung out of the earth or dropped from the heaven—stood the figure of a solitary Woman, dressed from head to foot in white garments; her face bent in grave inquiry on mine, her hand pointing to the dark cloud over London, as I faced her.

I was far too seriously startled by the suddenness with which this extraordinary apparition stood before me, in the dead of night and in that lonely place, to ask what she wanted. The strange woman spoke first.

"Is that the road to London?" she said.

I looked attentively at her, as she put that singular question to me. It was then nearly one o'clock. All I could discern distinctly by the moonlight, was a colourless, youthful face, meagre and sharp to look at, about the cheeks and chin; large, grave, wistfully-attentive eyes; nervous, uncertain lips; and light hair of a pale, brownish-yellow hue. There was nothing wild, nothing immodest in her manner: it was quiet and self-controlled, a little melan-

choly and a little touched by suspicion; not exactly the manner of a lady, and, at the same time, not the manner of a woman in the humblest rank of life. The voice, little as I had yet heard of it, had something curiously still and mechanical in its tones, and the utterance was remarkably rapid. She held a small bag in her hand: and her dress—bonnet, shawl, and gown all of white—was, so far as I could guess, certainly not composed of very delicate or very expensive materials. Her figure was slight, and rather above the average height—her gait and actions free from the slightest approach to extravagance. This was all that I could observe of her, in the dim light and under the perplexingly-strange circumstances of our meeting. What sort of woman she was, and how she came to be out alone in the high-road, an hour after midnight, I altogether failed to guess. The one thing of which I felt certain was, that the grossest of mankind could not have misconstrued her motive in speaking, even at that suspiciously late hour and in that suspiciously lonely place.

"Did you hear me?" she said, still quietly and rapidly, and without the least fretfulness or impatience. "I asked if that was the way to London."

"Yes," I replied, "that is the way: it leads to St. John's Wood and the Regent's Park. You must excuse my not answering you before. I was rather startled by your sudden appearance in the road; and I am, even now, quite unable to account for it."

"You don't suspect me of doing anything wrong, do you? I have done nothing wrong. I have met with an accident—I am very unfortunate in being here alone so late. Why do you suspect me of doing wrong?"

She spoke with unnecessary earnestness and agitation, and shrank back from me several paces. I did my best to reassure her.

"Pray don't suppose that I have any idea of suspecting you," I said, "or any other wish than to be of assistance to you, if I can. I only wondered at your appearance in the road, because it seemed to me to be empty the instant before I saw you."

She turned, and pointed back to a place at the junction of the road to London and the road to Hampstead, where there was a gap in the hedge.

"I heard you coming," she said, "and hid there to see what sort of man you were, before I risked speaking. I doubted and feared about it till you passed; and then I was obliged to steal after you, and touch you."

Steal after me, and touch me? Why not call to me? Strange, to say the least of it.

"May I trust you?" she asked. "You don't think the worse of me because I have met with an accident?" She stopped in confusion; shifted her bag from one hand to the other; and sighed bitterly.

The loneliness and helplessness of the woman touched me. The natural impulse to assist her and to spare her, got the better of the judgment,

the caution, the worldly tact, which an elder, wiser, and colder man might have summoned to help him in this strange emergency.

"You may trust me for any harmless purpose," I said. "If it troubles you to explain your strange situation to me, don't think of returning to the subject again. I have no right to ask you for any explanations. Tell me how I can help you; and if I can, I will."

"You are very kind, and I am very, very thankful to have met you." The first touch of womanly tenderness that I had heard from her, trembled in her voice as she said the words; but no tears glistened in those large, wistfully attentive eyes of hers, which were still fixed on me. "I have only been in London once before," she went on, more and more rapidly; "and I know nothing about that side of it, yonder. Can I get a fly, or a carriage of any kind? Is it too late? I don't know. If you could show me where to get a fly—and if you will only promise not to interfere with me, and to let me leave you, when and how I please—I have a friend in London who will be glad to receive me—I want nothing else—will you promise?"

She looked anxiously up and down the road; shifted her bag again from one hand to the other; repeated the words, "Will you promise?" and looked hard in my face, with a pleading fear and confusion that it troubled me to see.

What could I do? Here was a stranger utterly and helplessly at my mercy—and that stranger a forlorn woman. No house was near; no one was passing whom I could consult; and no earthly right existed on my part to give me a power of control over her, even if I had known how to exercise it. I trace these lines, self-distrustfully, with the shadows of after-events darkening the very paper I write on; and still I say, what could I do?

What I did do, was to try and gain time by questioning her.

"Are you sure that your friend in London will receive you at such a late hour as this?" I said.

"Quite sure. Only say you will let me leave you when and how I please—only say you won't interfere with me. Will you promise?"

As she repeated the words for the third time, she came close to me, and laid her hand, with a sudden gentle stealthiness, on my bosom—a thin hand; a cold hand (when I removed it with mine) even on that sultry night. Remember that I was young; remember that the hand which touched me was a woman's.

"Will you promise?"

"Yes."

One word! The little familiar word that is on everybody's lips, every hour in the day. Oh me! and I tremble, now, when I write it.

We set our faces towards London, and walked on together in the first still hour of the new day—I, and this woman, whose name, whose character, whose story, whose objects in life, whose very presence by my side, at that moment, were fathomless mysteries to me. It was like a

dream. Was I Walter Hartright? Was this the well-known, uneventful road, where holiday people strolled on Sundays? Had I really left, little more than an hour since, the quiet, decent, conventionally-domestic atmosphere of my mother's cottage? I was too bewildered—too conscious also of a vague sense of something like self-reproach—to speak to my strange companion for some minutes. It was her voice again that first broke the silence between us.

"I want to ask you something," she said, suddenly. "Do you know many people in London?"

"Yes, a great many."

"Many men of rank and title?" There was an unmistakable tone of suspicion in the strange question. I hesitated about answering it.

"Some," I said, after a moment's silence.

"Many"—she came to a full stop, and looked me searchingly in the face—"many men of the rank of Baronet?"

Too much astonished to reply, I questioned her in my turn.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I hope, for my own sake, there is one Baronet that you don't know."

"Will you tell me his name?"

"I can't—I daren't—I forget myself, when I mention it." She spoke loudly and almost fiercely, raised her clenched hand in the air, and shook it passionately; then, on a sudden, controlled herself again, and added, in tones lowered to a whisper: "Tell me which of them you know."

I could hardly refuse to humour her in such a trifle, and I mentioned three names. Two, the names of fathers of families whose daughters I taught; one, the name of a bachelor who had once taken me a cruise in his yacht, to make sketches for him.

"Ah! you *don't* know him," she said, with a sigh of relief. "Are you a man of rank and title yourself?"

"Far from it. I am only a drawing-master."

As the reply passed my lips—a little bitterly, perhaps—she took my arm with the abruptness which characterised all her actions.

"Not a man of rank and title," she repeated to herself. "Thank God! I may trust *him*."

I had hitherto contrived to master my curiosity out of consideration for my companion; but it got the better of me, now.

"I am afraid you have serious reason to complain of some man of rank and title?" I said.

"I am afraid the baronet, whose name you are unwilling to mention to me, has done you some grievous wrong? Is he the cause of your being out here at this strange time of night?"

"Don't ask me; don't make me talk of it," she answered. "I'm not fit, now. I have been cruelly used and cruelly wronged. You will be kinder than ever, if you will walk on fast, and not speak to me. I sadly want to be silent—I sadly want to quiet myself, if I can."

We moved forward again at a quick pace; and for half an hour, at least, not a word passed

on either side. From time to time, being forbidden to make any more enquiries, I stole a look at her face. It was always the same; the lips close shut, the brow frowning, the eyes looking straight forward, eagerly and yet absently. We had reached the first houses, and were close on the new Wesleyan College, before her set features relaxed, and she spoke once more.

"Do you live in London?" she said.

"Yes." As I answered, it struck me that she might have formed some intention of appealing to me for assistance or advice, and that I ought to spare her a possible disappointment by warning her of my approaching absence from home. So I added: "But to-morrow I shall be away from London for some time. I am going into the country."

"Where?" she asked. "North, or south?"

"North—to Cumberland."

"Cumberland!" she repeated the word tenderly. "Ah! I wish I was going there, too. I was once happy in Cumberland."

I tried again to lift the veil that hung between this woman and me.

"Perhaps you were born," I said, "in the beautiful Lake country."

"No," she answered. "I was born in Hampshire; but I once went to school for a little while in Cumberland. Lakes? I don't remember any lakes. It's Limmeridge village, and Limmeridge House, I should like to see again."

It was my turn, now, to stop suddenly. In the excited state of my curiosity, at that moment, the chance reference to Mr. Fairlie's place of residence, on the lips of my strange companion, staggered me with astonishment.

"Did you hear anybody calling after us?" she asked, looking up and down the road affrightedly, the instant I stopped.

"No, no. I was only struck by the name of Limmeridge House—I heard it mentioned by some Cumberland people a few days since."

"Ah! not *my* people. Mrs. Fairlie is dead; and her husband is dead; and their little girl may be married and gone away by this time. I can't say who lives at Limmeridge now. If any more are left there of that name, I only know I love them for Mrs. Fairlie's sake."

She seemed about to say more; but while she was speaking, we came within view of the turnpike, at the top of the Avenue-road. Her hand tightened round my arm, and she looked anxiously at the gate before us.

"Is the turnpike man looking out?" she asked.

He was not looking out; no one else was near the place when we passed through the gate. The sight of the gas-lamps and houses seemed to agitate her, and to make her impatient.

"This is London," she said. "Do you see any carriage I can get? I am tired and frightened. I want to shut myself in, and be driven away."

I explained to her that we must walk a little further to get to a cab-stand, unless we were

fortunate enough to meet with an empty vehicle; and then tried to resume the subject of Cumberland. It was useless. That idea of shutting herself in, and being driven away, had now got full possession of her mind. She could think and talk of nothing else.

We had hardly proceeded a third of the way down the Avenue-road, when I saw a cab draw up at a house a few doors below us, on the opposite side of the way. A gentleman got out and let himself in at the garden door. I hailed the cab, as the driver mounted the box again. When we crossed the road, my companion's impatience increased to such an extent that she almost forced me to run.

"It's so late," she said. "I am only in a hurry because it's so late."

"I can't take you, sir, if you're not going towards Tottenham-court-road," said the driver, civilly, when I opened the cab door. "My horse is dead beat, and I can't get him no further than the stable."

"Yes, yes. That will do for me. I'm going that way—I'm going that way." She spoke with breathless eagerness, and pressed by me into the cab.

I had assured myself that the man was sober as well as civil, before I let her enter the vehicle. And now, when she was seated inside, I entreated her to let me see her set down safely at her destination.

"No, no, no," she said, vehemently. "I'm quite safe and quite happy now. If you are a gentleman, remember your promise. Let him drive on, till I stop him. Thank you—oh! thank you, thank you!"

My hand was on the cab door. She caught it in hers, kissed it, and pushed it away. The cab drove off at the same moment—I started into the road, with some vague idea of stopping it again, I hardly knew why—hesitated from dread of frightening and distressing her—called, at last, but not loudly enough to attract the driver's attention. The sound of the wheels grew fainter in the distance—the cab melted into the black shadows on the road—the woman in white was gone.

Ten minutes, or more, had passed. I was still on the same side of the way; now mechanically walking forward a few paces; now stopping again absently. At one moment, I found myself doubting the reality of my own adventure; at another, I was perplexed and distressed by an uneasy sense of having done wrong, which yet left me confusedly ignorant of how I could have done right. I hardly knew where I was going, or what I meant to do next; I was conscious of nothing but the confusion of my own thoughts, when I was abruptly recalled to myself—awakened I might almost say—by the sound of rapidly approaching wheels close behind me.

I was on the dark side of the road, in the thick shadow of some garden trees, when I stopped to look round. On the opposite, and lighter, side of the way, a short distance below

me, a policeman was strolling along in the direction of the Regent's Park.

The carriage passed me—an open chaise driven by two men.

"Stop!" cried one. "There's a policeman. Let's ask him."

The horse was instantly pulled up, a few yards beyond the dark place where I stood.

"Policeman!" cried the first speaker. "Have you seen a woman pass this way?"

"What sort of woman, sir?"

"A woman in a lavender-coloured gown——"

"No, no," interposed the second man. "The clothes we gave her were found on her bed. She must have gone away in the clothes she wore when she came to us. In white, policeman. A woman in white."

"I haven't seen her, sir."

"If you, or any of your men meet with the woman, stop her, and send her in careful keeping to that address. I'll pay all expenses, and a fair reward into the bargain."

The policeman looked at the card that was handed down to him.

"Why are we to stop her, sir? What has she done?"

"Done! She has escaped from my Asylum. Don't forget: a woman in white. Drive on."

LOVED AND LOST.

"ICH HABE GELEBT UND GELIEBT."

So you tell me Annie's dying, dying all for love of me!

Spirits gone and beauty flying, cheek as pale as flesh may be;

And you sue me for your sister, telling me I shall repent,

I shall mourn her when I've missed her, when my present rage is spent.

Mabel Durham, rage no longer fires my spirit, shakes my frame;

There is yet a passion stronger, which I do not care to name,

Deeper in its root than many which more rapidly enslave:

Mabel, between me and Annie falls the shadow of a grave!

Ellen Vaughan, her rank forgetting, promised to become my bride;

Every night the sun in setting saw me whispering by her side—

Whispering 'mid her golden tresses, whispering in her trellised ear.

Ah! those days which memory blesses. Ah! these days so dark and drear!

Loved we with a love so holy, so intense and so entire,

Jealousy progressed but slowly, when she tried to thin its fire;

We were heart and heart together, love was unto love avowed.

Hast thou marked the summer weather specked by but one fleecy cloud?

That small cloud was Annie's raising. Ere its influence passed away,

I had marked Nell's bright eye glazing, seen her lithe form turn to clay;

She who would have fronted danger, learned at gossips' breath to pale,
She herself to doubt a stranger, sank beneath the slanderer's tale.

False and fickle then they called me, lightly wooing, lightly won;

Every woman's eye enthralled me, but my heart was caught by none;

I had proffered vows to many, whom I since had met with scorn;

I had whispered love to Annie, e'en while pledged to Ellen Vaughan!

Lies prevailed, and Ellen faded. I was absent. When I came,

But her closing eyes upbraided, scarce a word her lips could frame;

All she said was meek and loving, prayer that sin might be forgiven,

Not a sentence of reproving—peace on earth and hope in Heaven.

Ellen died, and then I learned it—learned what said the public liar!

Anger in my memory burned it, stamped it there in words of fire!

O'er her grave I swore detection, swift discovery of the hand

Which had stabbed my life's affection, which my death in life had planned.

Soon I knew my false accuser; Mabel, now you know her too.

Think you, e'en lest you should lose her, I could e'er your sister woo?

Vengeance I've foresworn; but never, to the latest hour of life,

Could I venture to forgive her, dream of making her my wife!

ITALIAN DISTRUST.

MR. GALLENGA, in his late work on Piedmont, referred to at page 461 of this journal, has had the courage to tell his countrymen a number of home truths, which, whatever may be the fruit they are destined to bear, have assuredly not increased his own popularity amongst them. It is not at any time a very gracious task to comment upon the social life and civilisation of a people; the moment chosen for the present criticism was peculiarly unhappy. For a long time back it has been the habit for all writers on Italy to hold a certain tone of compassionate pity for the people. Compared with their great ancestors, whose monuments stood around on every side, it was not very difficult to disparage them; and it was actually to satiety that we were told they were priest-ridden, bigoted, superstitious, ignorant, lazy, and regardless of truth. The English clergyman who passed his winter at Rome came back full of the gross ignorance of the priesthood, their lax morals, and their infidelity. The English politician brought back stories of numberless atrocities in the administrative rule of the peninsula—men arrested on mere hearsay, and left to rot out the remainder of life in a gaol. The English sentimental tourist recorded his griefs

and disappointments over a people who accepted slavery for their indolence, and would never resent any tyranny that did not encroach upon their idleness. In fact, with an occasional contemptuous remark on some possible capability—some half-dubious hope of what Italy might become under a better and more enlightened government—the general tone in speaking of the Italians was severely condemnatory and rebukeful.

Late events in the peninsula—the great efforts made to throw off the yoke of Austria and to win an independence—have presented the people in a new light; and whether reviewing their conduct in the field, or their maintenance of order under immense difficulties, men have been forced to own that the nation has been unfairly dealt with, and that, for every fault or short-coming ascribed to it, it would not be hard to find some compensating good quality. Had the recognition gone so far, much good might have resulted. Unfortunately, however, the acknowledgment was a reaction, and, like all reactions, unmeasured and exaggerated. Our writers—especially newspaper correspondents—next took to praising and extolling everything Italian. They discovered in the people not only all the great qualities of their glorious ancestors, but a host of gifts to which their forefathers could lay no claim. It was not only that they were heroes in the field and sages in council, but they were models of home affection and domestic virtues. Our lady writers took the lead in these panegyrics: never very chary in strong epithets, here they were splendidly profuse. Such husbands, sons, wives, daughters and sisters as Italy presented were nowhere to be found. The whole tableau was Godfrey de Bouillon, with a dash of Paul and Virginia. It is needless to say that these were about as far from truth as the others, and that the *fact* about Italy lay in the interval between them.

The Italians have many great and good qualities; they have some most brilliant qualities: they are eminently adapted for a very high civilisation; but, with all this, it may be doubted whether they are yet exactly suited to the forms of constitutional government, or whether, from the character of their intellects, their traditions, and natures, they would not thrive better under the rule of a wise and temperate monarchy. The question is too wide and too far-reaching to be discussed here, and the writer will simply adduce one, only one, characteristic of this people, which he regards as totally incompatible with the safe working of all constitutional government.

The bane and poison of Italian nature—and this, be it understood, not limited to class or rank, but extending throughout all conditions, and permeating all gradations—the bane of Italy is Distrust. No man believes his neighbour, nor does any man expect implicit credit to himself. Every assertion, every statement—no matter from how high the quarter they may have proceeded, no matter how many hostages to honour the speaker may have given, no matter how unsullied the fame, how pure the life, how respon-

sible the station of him who uttered them—is received as something that may be, but not that of necessity must be, true. Thus, Cavour may speak, and some ignoble demagogue reply to him, and the Italian world will accord no more faith to the statement of the one than the other, though they will readily concede more importance to the words of the minister than to those of the penny-a-liner. What share the Church of Rome may have had in implanting this baneful trait in the Italian heart, how far the casuistic doctrines of Jesuitry may have contributed towards it, how much its growth may have been aided by the natural craft and subtlety of a people who feel no greater shame than that of being duped, is not the purpose here to inquire. The writer would simply limit himself to the assertion, that, of all the people of Europe, the Italian is the most distrustful, and that this same distrust is fatal to everything like the working of free institutions.

We, in England, do not for a moment pretend that our own Parliament is above many and grave suspicions; the very papers of the day are filled with accounts of bribery the most barefaced and disgraceful; the history of party is not exactly a record of unsullied honour and uncompromising fidelity; but there is still amongst us such a thing as public honour and good faith. There are men on each side of the House, on whose word, once spoken, the nation would as implicitly rely as upon any law of the land; rely upon it, too, in its plain and ordinary significance, not deeming it a thing to admit of this meaning, or that explanation, not to be accepted in a half sense, or with a certain qualification, but as the assertion of a fact about which no two honest men could ever dispute. With a somewhat lengthy experience of Italy and its people, the writer does not believe this to be possible there. He cannot imagine any statement to be so clear as to be accepted without reservation, nor any pledge to be so literal as to be regarded as infallibly binding.

What Macaulay uttered as an illustration, it has occurred to him to witness as a fact. "Let Othello," said Macaulay, "be represented before an Italian audience, and the whole sympathy of the public will be with Iago; and all they will accord his dupe will be a sort of contemptuous pity." This the writer has seen—seen, too, when Othello was represented by the first actor of Europe—Salvini. Yet even Salvini's genius, aided by all that the greatest dramatist of the world placed in his hands, could not depict the noble Moor as anything higher than the poor weak victim of an easily detected fraud—a common-place vulgar intelligence, in conflict with one of masterly skill and power. As to the moral elements of the struggle, they were never thought of. There was before the audience, a man who lied, and a man who believed him. The man who lied, was the type of all that intellect could boast as subtle, deep, and designing; the other was a poor, weak, confiding fool, and he got his deserts.

"Remember, dear John," said Lord Byron,

in writing to Mr. Murray, "remember, above all things, that *their* morality is not *your* morality." And this profound truth should never be lost sight of in our judgments of a foreign nation. Although the man who could not command credit for his words, would be with us, in England, a very worthless public man, the case would be very different in Italy, since he would be only exposed to the epidemic of distrust that afflicts the whole people.

This distrust implies no censure nor blame of the individual discredited. Far from it. It very often indicates a high estimate of his craft and ability. To give an instance: About two years ago an English Secretary of Legation, in a moment of absence, and under the influence of a zeal to carry out a peculiar policy, had the misfortune to substitute his own views for those of a ministerial despatch. It was on the memorable case of the Cagliari. For this mistake—and that it was a mistake his own confession proved—he incurred the severe reprimand of his chief, and forfeited—for a time, at least—the reputation which long and most valuable services had acquired for him.

What was the Italian version of the incident? It was, that the English Foreign Secretary having determined to revoke certain pledges he had given, and change the line of policy he had adopted, resolved to sacrifice the character of one of his subordinates, throwing upon *him* the entire blame of words written by himself, and destroying—so far as such an imputation could destroy—the character for usefulness of a most efficient public servant. It was useless to answer this allegation, by stating that no English minister would stoop to such a subterfuge, nor any English gentleman submit to become his accomplice in it. The ruse was accounted not only a very fair and honourable one, but actually as exhibiting a high capacity for office, and considerable diplomatic skill in the man who devised it.

Where, therefore, Falsehood is shorn of a great deal of its blackness, Incredulity is venial, and Distrust scarcely a fault.

Any one who has ever lived in Italy, or had ordinary dealings with Italians, must have found out how far his character for acuteness and intelligence depended upon his never believing anybody or anything. To assume as a fact something which you had not submitted to the test of your own knowledge was always the sign of a weak, credulous nature, of one who was, and deserved to be, a dupe.

Now—not to take any higher or better ground—what a lamentable loss of time, what a cruel waste of human life, is incurred in all this incredulity! How slowly would the work of construction go on if the mason had to test every brick before he laid it! Only fancy the man who would not venture on a voyage if he had not inspected the vessel before she was coppered!

The spectacle Italy presents at this moment

is, rightfully and wrongfully, Universal Distrust; nor can you so successfully appeal to the Italian public as by the expression of your want of confidence in this man or in that, and your firm conviction with the Psalmist in his impatience, "that all men are liars."

HOUSE-TOP TELEGRAPHS.

ABOUT twelve years ago, when the tavern fashion of supplying beer and sandwiches at a fixed price became very general, the proprietor of a small suburban pot-house reduced the system to an absurdity by announcing that he sold a glass of ale and an electric shock for fourpence. That he really traded in this combination of science and drink is more than doubtful, and his chief object must have been to procure an increase of business by an unusual display of shopkeeping wit. Whatever motive he had to stimulate his humour, the fact should certainly be put upon record that he was a man considerably in advance of his age. He was probably not aware that his philosophy in sport would be made a science in earnest in the space of a few years, any more than many other bold humorists who have been amusing on what they knew nothing about. The period has not yet arrived when the readers of Bishop Wilkins's famous discourse upon aerial navigation will be able to fly to the moon, but the hour is almost at hand when the fanciful announcement of the beer-shop keeper will represent an every-day familiar fact. A glass of ale and an electric shock will shortly be sold for fourpence, and the scientific part of the bargain will be something more useful than a mere fillip to the human nerves. It will be an electric shock that sends a message across the house-tops through the web of wires to any one of a hundred and twenty district telegraph stations, that are to be scattered amongst the shopkeepers all over the town.

The industrious spiders have long since formed themselves into a commercial company, called the London District Telegraph Company (limited), and they have silently, but effectively, spun their trading web. One hundred and sixty miles of wire are now fixed along parapets, through trees, over garrets, round chimney-pots, and across roads on the southern side of the river, and the other one hundred and twenty required miles will soon be fixed in the same manner on the northern side. The difficulty decreases as the work goes on, and the sturdiest Englishman is ready to give up the roof of his castle in the interests of science and the public good, when he finds that many hundreds of his neighbours have already led the way.

The out-door mechanical exigencies of this London district telegraph require at least six house-top resting-places in the space of a mile. To get these places at the nominal rental of a shilling a year (with three months' notice for removal) has been the object of the company, professedly that a low tariff of charges may be based upon a moderate outlay of capital on the

permanent way. The peculiarity of the company's operations, in appealing rather to the public sentiment of the middle and lower classes, than to their sense of business or desire for gain, has prolonged its out-door negotiations; though not to any great extent. The trial may have been severe, but the British householder, with a few exceptions, has nobly stood the test. He has shown that, if properly applied to and properly treated, he may belong to a nation of shopkeepers, and yet be something more than a mere mercenary citizen.

The first time the proposition to electrify all London was brought before the British householder, it was calculated to inspire considerable alarm. The telegraph, as at present existing, is not a popular institution. Its charges are high; its working is secret and bewildering to the average mind. Its case, as displayed at the railway stations, may look like a mixture of the beer machine and the eight-day clock; but the curious hieroglyphics and restless arrows on its dial surface are like the differential calculus framed in a gooseberry tart. The unknown may masquerade in the dress of the known; but the railway porter will still shake his head.

When the sole depositary of the telegraphic secret has gone to dinner, the whole electric system of that particular railway station must stand absolutely still. A certain amount of familiarity will breed contempt; an equal amount of unfamiliarity will breed awe and dread. The British householder has never seen a voltaic battery kill a cow, but he has heard that it is quite capable of such a feat. The telegraph is worked, in most cases, by a powerful voltaic battery, and therefore the British householder, having a general dread of lightning, logically keeps clear of all such machines.

The British householder (number one) took time to consider. The pole that the company wished to raise upon his roof might not be ornamental; might not suit the taste of his wife, who, at that moment, was unwell; might not meet with the approbation of his landlord, who was very fastidious, and very old. If the company would like to communicate with his landlord, that gentleman was to be found in Berkshire, if he had not gone to Switzerland, if he was not up the Rhine. The British householder (number sixty) was only one of a firm, and he could give no definite answer without his partners' consent. The British householder (number sixty-eight) was of a vacillating disposition, and after he had said yes, he took the trouble to run up the street, because he had suddenly decided to say no. The British householder (number seventy) was the second mate of a trading vessel, at that time supposed to be running along the South American coast. His wife was not prepared to say whether he had any objection to a flag-staff (although she thought he had not); and she could give no permission to the company until his return. The British householder (number seventy-four) very politely allowed a survey of his roof; and when the most

eligible point was fixed upon, he had legal doubts whether he had any power over it, as it was on a party wall. His next-door neighbour, when applied to, was equally scrupulous, and without counsel's opinion it was impossible to get any further. The British householder (number ninety) was in a mist with regard to the whole scheme. He associated telegraphs of all kinds with large railway stations; and large railway stations with red and white signal lights. He would sacrifice a good deal for science and the public interest, but to have his parapet glaring all night like a doctor's doorway, was more than he could bear to think of. An explanation, accompanied by a display of small pocket models (one of a standard, as large as a pencil-case; the other of a bracket, the size of a watch) was necessary to pacify him, and when he found that no lamp was required, he gave his conditional consent. The British householder (number ninety-two) was inclined to be facetious, and he hoped that the company would not do anything to blow him up. The British householder (number ninety-eight) was only too glad to be of service, but unfortunately his house was so old and so crumbling, that not another nail could be driven into it with safety. The British householder (number five hundred and four) was an old lady subject to fits, and she only wondered what next would be proposed to her to hurry her into the grave. The British householder (number six hundred and ten) was another old lady who worshipped a clean passage; and she merely consented upon condition that the workpeople only passed through her house once, to get at the roof, carefully wiping their shoes on the mat in the passage, and once again, to leave the premises, on coming down, carefully wiping their shoes on the mat in the attic. An agreement was made upon this peculiar basis; and the carpenters were kept sixteen hours amongst the chimney-pots; their food being drawn up by a rope from the street. The British householder (number seven hundred and six) was almost rash in his obliging disposition, and he gave the company full permission to take his roof off if they found it in the way. The British householder (number seven hundred and four) might have been induced to give his assistance, had not his wife loudly warned him, from the depths of the shop parlour, to beware. The consent of British householder (number eight hundred and ten) was secured by a display of the pocket-models; but, when the workmen arrived with a pole as long as a clothes-prop, he stopped them, on the ground that they were attempting an imposition. He had not allowed for the portable character of the models; and the pole he expected to see fixed on the house-top, was about the size of a tooth-pick.

Nearly four thousand calls were made upon this errand, to get the consents of some nineteen hundred people; and this only for the hundred and sixty miles of metropolitan wire already raised. The hundred and twenty miles remaining to be surveyed will involve, perhaps,

nearly three thousand more visits before the requisite fourteen hundred consents are obtained. The landlords of all house property are to be consulted as well as the tenants, which doubles the labour of the company's agents. When the wire is finally fixed over the two hundred and eighty miles, there will have been about seven thousand interviews and negotiations, and nearly three thousand five hundred contracts.

Such is the labour required to spin the thin web that is now shooting across crowded thoroughfares, or creeping under the heavy paving-stones, and joining the hands of chapels, taverns, palaces, police-stations, warehouses, hovels, and shops. Other labour will be required to bring down the mysterious strings, so that every one may be able to move the living puppets, from station to station, from Highgate to Peckham, from Hammersmith to Bow.

Some of these strings (perhaps to the number of ten) will drop into district stations—offices that will act as centres of particular divisions; others (perhaps to the number of a hundred) will drop into familiar shops and trading-places: amongst the pickle-jars of the oilman, the tarts of the pastrycook, the sugar-casks of the grocer, the beer-barrels of the publican, the physic-bottles of the dispensing chemist. The Post-office, industrious and effective as it is, will find an active rival standing by its side—bidding against it for popularity, coming in to share its message-carrying trade. The elements of nature will be harnessed for hack-work; and four pennyworth of lightning will be as common as a box of pills. The old cab-horse will wonder why he is resting so long on his stony stand; and the two millions and more of busy metropolitan inhabitants may welcome another means of easing their crowded streets. Everybody will find a way of talking over everybody else's head, or under everybody else's feet, or behind everybody else's back. "No door-mat to-night" will be whispered from Brompton to Hampstead, and no one will be aware of the fact but the two communicants. The Elephant and Castle will despatch the tenderest messages to the Angel at Islington; and as soon as the back of young Emma's mamma is turned at Camberwell, young Edwin will be fully informed at Chelsea. St. John's-wood will suddenly be invited to a roughly got up, but pleasant party at Holloway; and Kensington will be told that a private box for the Opera is waiting for it at Bow-street. The doctor at Finsbury will be requested to step up, at once, to Park-lane; and Bayswater will stop the toilet of Clapham by announcing a sudden postponement of a dinner party. Greenwich will be told by Kensington to prepare a whitebait banquet in three hours; and Rotherhithe will be informed by Camden-town that the child is a boy, and that the mother is doing extraordinarily well. The firemen of Cannon-street will be called to a red-hot task at Blackheath; and when a policeman is missing—as usual—from his beat, a "re-

serve" can be summoned from the station. The saddest of all messages will also fly across the tidings of hope; for Death will sometimes present himself at the shop-counter to whisper his ghostly dispensations along the wires.

The great centre of all this system is in Lothbury, London, where a graceful school of about sixty young ladies are even now learning the mysteries of the old railway telegraph signals. Whether they are training their minds and hands in an art that will be wholly set aside, yet remains to be seen; but whatever machines may be used as the central and district stations, it is certain that the sub-district, or shop-stations, will require something exceedingly simple and convenient.

The telegraphs most generally in use, both in this country and on the Continent, require great skill and practice to work; and, in translating their arbitrary signs into ordinary language, it becomes necessary to have specially educated persons to work them. This necessity was, for the first time, obviated by the system of telegraphs invented by Professor Wheatstone in 1840, in which either the letters of the alphabet on a fixed dial were pointed to by a moving hand, or a moving dial presenting the letters successively behind a fixed aperture. In these, the transmission of the message consisted simply in bringing in succession the letters composing it opposite a fixed mark, by means of an apparatus called the transmitter. These instruments were constructed to work, either by the currents generated by induction from a permanent magnet, or by the aid of a voltaic battery; in the former case the instruments required no preparation to put them, or attention to keep them, in action. Since then, Professor Wheatstone has devoted much time to the improvement of this class of telegraphs; the principal object of which has been to effect their movements with greater steadiness, certainty, and rapidity than hitherto, and by means of magnets of small dimensions. As the instruments are at present constructed, a lady or a child may, after a few minutes' instruction, send or receive a message by them; and, with practice, as many signals may be conveyed per minute as by any telegraphs in present use. Especially applicable to house-top telegraphs, they are more efficient than any others for interchanging messages on railways, in public offices, manufactories, private mansions, docks, mines, &c. Being very portable, and requiring no preparation, they are the best telegraphs for military purposes; and being constructed so as not to be affected by any extraneous movement, they can be used with perfect safety in ships, even on a rough sea, or on railway trains in motion. Professor Wheatstone's new telegraphs have been some time in daily use at the London Docks, and between the Houses of Parliament and the Queen's Printing-office, two miles distant. In form these telegraphs are as portable and familiar as a quart pot or a loaf of bread. A circular box, the shape and size of a small

ship's compass, is placed over a battery of magnets that would go in an ordinary hat-case. The surface of the box presents a dial face, like a clock, round which are arranged the letters of the alphabet, a sign or two, and the ten numerals. Opposite each of the letters—spreading out from the side of the box, like an ornamental fringe round the dial-plate—is a single tongue of brass, resembling a large key of a German flute. By pressing down one of these tongues with your finger (opposite the letter A, for example) you cause a needle, like the long hand of a watch, to point at the same letter on another dial, exactly similar in form, but smaller in size, placed under the eye of your correspondent at the other end of the wire, if need be, miles off. The distance of your needle-dial from your battery may be thirty miles, or further, according to the power of your magnets; but the action of the letter-key upon the letter-needle is instantaneous and infallible. The same operation, accompanied by the same result, will indicate numerals, according to a preconcerted sign, as the figures are placed round the two dials, as far as they will go, in a circle outside the letters. If the battery is portable, the corresponding machinery is much more so, being even smaller than many an ordinary French mantel-shelf clock. The needle-dial is fixed in a small barrel, and fitted up so as to revolve like a microscope, and suit the height of the person observing it. A voltaic battery would be less costly than magnets, but more liable to get out of order in shop-stations. The whole apparatus, as it stands, would not take up half the space required by a post-office desk, or require any more intellect to work it than is required to write or read a letter. An average housemaid could receive and despatch a message, if the shopman had just stepped round the corner, providing she could spell a few words of one, two, or three syllables.

Upon the adoption of some such apparatus as this—most probably upon this particular machine—will depend the success of the London District Telegraph Company. The whole scheme of popular telegraphs runs in a circle. Without simplicity and clearness of machinery there can be no extensive formation of cheap stations; without a number of cheap stations there can be no moderate tariff of charges; without this moderate tariff there can be no general patronage of telegraphs by the great body of the public. Without general patronage, again, there can be no moderate tariff.

Starting, as the company does, in some degree, upon a sentiment, by soliciting the unpaid co-operation of numerous householders and landlords, it will be morally bound to place itself in that position in which it can effect the greatest amount of public good at the lowest possible tariff of charges. The trading instincts of its board of directors will compel them to do this, if they are not kept in the right path by any higher feeling. It will be fortunate, therefore, for the metropolitan public that, though the electric shock may not always be

required with the glass of ale, both may be included in the fourpence, when absolutely necessary.

A PHYSICIAN'S DREAMS.

I.

DREAMS being the stronghold of the mysterious, it may be supposed that I have greater wonders to relate than any waking phenomena on which I have dwelt. But it is not so; and, a slight consideration of what sleep is, will show my reader that it cannot be so. Dream-books rest on a very flimsy foundation; our life is a unity; sleep is not an interruption of natural laws, but a carrying on of the unvarying laws of our being; not a phenomenon, but a fact in our human constitution.

What is sleep?

Nay. What is the beating of the heart? What is breathing? Sleep, like these, is a vital necessity, an act, or (to use the word in its philosophical sense) a *passion* of life. Being a vital state, it answers to the words of Pope:

Like following life through creatures you dissect,
You lose it in the moment you detect.

To define sleep would only be to render less clear the idea which is attached to the well-known word. Shakespeare wisely describes it in a passage needless to quote entire, by its effects merely. He calls it, amongst other things,

Chief nourisher in life's feast.

Pursuing this truthful thought, we ask, "Why chief nourisher?" The answer must be, "Because it brings us needful rest—relaxation of the tired and stretched-out nerves and muscles—but, above all, repose and refreshment of brain." Active thought is almost entirely suspended in sleep: habitual and wearisome thought are interrupted. Sleep is truly the "death of each day's life."

Physically, sleep is a passive state of the brain, in which that organ pulsates equably, and for the most part in a manner undisturbed by the agitation of thought. A medical man had opportunity, for a long time, of observing the brain of a patient, which, to a considerable extent, had been laid bare by a fracture, and removal of part of the skull. He looked often at the bare brain, while the patient was awake: while the patient was asleep. The observer saw that, in a waking state, the brain had intelligent, and, as one might say, telegraphic motions, correspondent with the thoughts which it was printing off. The doctor, looking at the exposed brain while the patient was conversing, perceived that different cerebral motions accompanied the different ideas it was excited by. He was looking manifestly at the great laboratory of thought. But, in a state of sleep, the patient's brain worked and telegraphed no more. It became a mere pulse, like that at the wrist, and, indeed, was found to correspond, in its regular beat, with the beat of the artery. Hence follows that, in as far as the quietude of the brain is hindered, sleep is hindered in the same proportion. Thus, a mere mechanical quieting of the brain induces sleep. I have read of sleepless men, who, to drown the

busy brain in a kind of artificial apoplexy, have had themselves whirled about on a millstone, with their heads inclining outward, so that the blood being thrown from all parts upward, to the great workshop of the mind, flooded it, and washed out the wakefulness. Opium, morphine, counting to a hundred (doubtful), hop-pillows, fancying you see your own breath (very doubtful), draughts of heavy drink at bedtime, gin, punch, and other night-caps, have all the same intention as the mill-stone: namely, to deaden the brain, and bring it to a regular pulsation.

Yet too heavy sleep is nearly as unhealthy as, and is, perhaps, more unhealthy than, a considerable degree of habitual sleeplessness. It may be questioned if they who boast that they find themselves, after eight hours' sleep, just where they first lay down in bed, without even turning round, and certainly without dreaming, are not short-necked and apoplectic. Yet, on the other hand, horrible, perplexing, fatiguing dreams are, in themselves, a disease.

I saw, in my far-gone days, two wonderful bachelor brothers (twins, I think they were), who, like Hamlet, had "bad dreams." Yet, only to look at them, you saw at once the men were good, honest, wiry, simple-hearted, old hunting squires, of some four thousand a year each. They did not drink mightily—at least I think they did not; they chased lustily, I know. Yet I heard, with my own (then) boyish ears, the driest, tallest, and thinnest one say, that he and his brother were so harassed by horrible dreams that they both slept in contiguous apartments, with nothing but an open door between them, on the firm mutual compact that the moment one should hear the other groan in his sleep, that one should jump out of bed, and give the groaner a good shaking to call him back from his world of agony.

"But do you not, by this, get very little sleep and refreshment?" asked my father of the narrator.

"Perhaps," replied the wiry brother; "but the dreams fatigue us a great deal more than lying awake all night would do."

I am a great dreamer, and dreams (not quite so bad as the squires') make a vast part of the life of multitudes of mankind.

What, then, are dreams?

I would answer in brief: Dreams are a combination of imperfect sensation with imperfect thought.

Most of their phenomena seem to be brought about by what a watchmaker would call the duplex movement in man—namely, of mind and matter—and are only what might be expected of a living substance that requires rest, and a living soul that demands activity. The mind, always sympathising, more or less, with the body, gets lazy with the body's sleep, and can no longer exercise her functions clearly; yet still she makes a faint struggle to exercise them; continues to invent when she can no longer perceive; executes her dance though in manacles (sometimes glittering, sometimes gloomy ones); and even, when the sleep is light and imperfect,

endeavours to correct the errors of her clouded perceptions.

"Does the mind always think?" asks Locke; and, rashly as it seems to me, concludes from our frequent non-remembrance of dreams, that the question should be resolved in the negative. But how frequently we think we have passed a dreamless night, and yet, in the course of the ensuing day, some little circumstance shall suddenly cry, "Open, Sesame!" to the brain: the key turns in the door of the closet to which the mind has consigned her vagaries, and we find, duly ticketed and labelled, a long and perhaps strange dream, which, but for that touch of kindred circumstance, we should never have remembered. The mind, then, may always think, though its thinking may not always leave a durable impression on the brain.

But there are persons who scarcely can be said to have minds, and who never think to any purpose. The error of philosophers is to judge all phenomena by their own philosophic consciousness. "Cogito, ergo sum," was the dictum of a philosopher. "Non cogito, ergo non sum," might be the equally good reasoning of a very dull man. Could we take a peep at some slumbering mass of mortality, whose brains are in his stomach, whose snore imitates the grunt of a swine, we should decidedly say, "The mind does not always think." From such a one we should have no right to expect dreams or dream-phenomena. Dreams! he never dreams by night, simply because he never thinks by day. But I think I may assert, of those who know they are alive, that there is a vital consciousness running through even dreamless slumber, which is very different from the senselessness of a swoon.

Dreaming is natural. Animals dream. The old dear greyhound, Transit, in my paternal home, used to move his legs on the rug by the fire as if he were coursing. My little Skye terrier faintly barks in his sleep, chasing, doubtless, an imaginary cat—the only game he knows, poor town-bred fellow!

Dryden says, I suppose on the authority of experience,

The little birds in dreams their songs repeat.

The phenomena of dreaming so puzzled an essayist on sleep, that he invented a theory about them, which he declared could alone solve their difficulties. This writer (whose name I forget, but whose work I read long since) affirmed boldly that all our dreams were caused by external agency, since to external agency they were often apparently due. He invented a troop of small familiar spirits. They were the external agency. "Would the soul," he asked, "torment herself in sleep by horrible creations? Could the soul play the wires of such a multitude of personages as peopled her visions?" The reasoning is shallow. Man, when awake, often torments himself with disagreeable thoughts. Indigestion, to say nothing of conscience, will create hypochondriac horrors to any amount: a too full blood throbbing through the brain will people

space with visions, seemingly palpable as those that distressed Nicolai, the Berlin bookseller. Then, since animals dream, one might ask, "What sort of spirits are employed in suggesting dreams to dogs?" and so knock down the argument by an appeal to absurdity.

As to the external nature of the phantasmagoria of dreams, we may, from the mere constitution of man, show that the soul needs no one but herself to prepare and paint the slides, or to set up in dream-land the magic-lantern of her puppet theatre. The mind is a great conjuror. Some have said that she is like a double-actioned harp, and can play many chords at one and the same moment. Certainly the duality of the nerves and organs of sense seem to indicate a power in the mind of (at least) a duplex action. The thought has been carried out in an ingenious volume called *The Duality of the Brain*. But the scenery of the soul is too varied to be accounted for by a mere double-action. To trace her phenomena we need that multiplicity of operation which her varied faculties do really imply. Within her consciousness is comprised creation—nay, God himself, or all that we can conceive of God. What wonder, then, that the mind can people her own territory, haunt herself, alarm herself, but, above all, amuse herself?

Not incompatible with repose are pleasing dreams, when life is just kept from stagnation by some small outlay of invention, some small exercise of the imaginative faculty. Thus, a vast proportion of the phenomena of dreams are explicable by a simple reference to the natural uses of sleep. "Laziness" is a great word to explain dreams. The soul is too wise to exert herself in sleep; for exertion would contradict the very reason why she sleeps. This consideration explains why dreams are mostly imperfect, unconnected, and void of volition. They are lazily constructed. Most dreamers, I doubt not, have observed that if they dream they are going to a play, or to hear a favourite singer, they seldom get to the play or succeed in hearing the singer. If they do enter what they suppose to be a theatre, the theatre is very dimly seen, and partaking more of the character of a room than of a theatre. If they do see the prima donna before them, something mostly prevents her singing. If they hear her sing—I never heard a man sing in a dream—the notes are few, and soon break off for some unimaginable reason. I imagine that a dream of sound is caused by an actual sound, which, at a moment of imperfect sleep, impresses the ear. I have, after hearing music in a dream, heard, on waking, the sound which manifestly prompted the dream: perhaps nothing more musical than a London cry. Occasionally, the sound in the dream, has been actually the sound out of the dream. I remember dreaming that I was sitting by a lady, and conversing with her (I think that conversations are not audibly carried on in dreams), when suddenly she began, to my infinite consternation, to crow like a cock. I woke with a start, and became aware

that a small bantam, in a yard over which I at that time slept, was really crowing in a shrill and female tone.

Another sort of abortive dream that I may mention, is a dream of vengeance. I have often seemed to be fighting with an imaginary adversary, always having the advantage, always pommeling him well. But never did it happen that I seemed to hurt my antagonist. After having rained blows upon him enough to kill him ten times over, he has invariably smiled at me, as if he said, "Thank you!" In the same way, I have sometimes dreamt I was arguing in anger with some obstinate person, whom I never succeeded in throwing into a rage.

The explanation of these abortive cases of dreaming is (as I take it), that our own sensations are clear to us in sleep, but very little beyond them. Some stray memory, some throb in the blood, makes us wish to hear a singer or to punish a foe; but the mind is too idle elaborately to create the theatre, or to put force into the adversary. In a state of imperfect sleep, that state in which a man says to himself, "I know that this is all a dream," I have sometimes known that I could see nothing of persons or objects, which yet I fancied were around me. Then, by an effort of momentary volition, I have torn open, as it were, my mental eyes, and had a strange burst of light, and a brief revelation of objects, sometimes very beautiful. I remember once dreaming I was climbing up the Acropolis of Athens—which I had never seen—in this sort of mind-blindness. Suddenly I reached the top, which I had approached from landward, and suddenly the wondrous dream-illumination, so strong when it does come, revealed to me the Archipelago, and all its islands, with a distinctness which is even now vivid in my memory.

On the whole, it may be averred that imperfect sensation is the great cause of dreams. Motions of the brain, motions of the blood, craving, or derangements of the stomach, various states of the fluids of the mouth, all bring with them, and reproduce in sleep, the sensations and ideas with which, in a waking state, they are associated.

It is a great and an interesting truth, which throws prodigious light on the mysteries of sensation, that sensation has her invariable language; that even in sleep she is consistent with herself; that, even when she reads in a disordered book, she herself is immutable. The last change in sensation, let it be originated how it may, engenders the idea. This is the great law of conscious being; and singular it is, that, through the falsity of some sensuous impressions, we become most aware of the truth of the law that regulates them.

From irregular motions of the brain, or too rapid passage of the blood (all the vital movements are quickened in sleep), we get many of those strange phenomena of dreams which are well-known to most people, but especially to the young, whose blood

—glows lively and returns
Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.

There are few human beings who have not dreamt of flying through the air; of falling from precipices, or the roofs of houses; or who have not, as boys, experienced the sensation, at the first approach of sleep, of suddenly being pulled up in a lively run by tumbling into a ditch—a startling feeling which has immediately awakened them, the explanation of which is the sudden relaxation of the fibres of the brain, by the very quick slumber of boyhood. Many of these hot-blooded phenomena become less frequent with advancing years, and die out altogether with old age: proof additional, that physical causes are nearly paramount in producing dreams.

The beginning of life, too, is the era of those disorders which I once saw thus emphatically catalogued on a tombstone, that recorded the deaths of three babies:

Hooping-cough!
Measles!
Small-pox!
Oh! dire diseases!

I know from experience that, when such maladies are hatching in the body, the dreams for a long time beforehand are terrible. There is a vastness of horror in the somnolent visions of childhood that is never matched at any later period. Often, as a boy, I have felt myself toiling on through some palpable obscure, through the whole of which, infinite spiders' webs and infinite threads from infinite looms were endlessly weaving about me—no, not *me*, but about some other identity into which I was half converted. Then, the peculiar horror seemed to lie in the very, very fine, spun-glass sort of texture of the webs and threads which I had to draw through my enormously swollen and puffy hands. Many, whom I have questioned on the subject, have told me that, in youth, the dance of infinite distaffs spinning infinite threads about their distended hands, or highly enlarged heads, was an amazing torment to them.

Crawling insects, slippery snakes, scratching cats, are dream-forms of perturbed blood. Even dream books prove this, for there is scarcely a dream of this kind, which perhaps the vain individual thinks peculiar to himself, that is not interpreted for the benefit of the million, thus showing that multitudes agree in their dreams. Pity that the ingenuity of the dream-interpreter should be wasted in explaining what a dream portends, not whence it arises. Misfortunes cannot be averted (nor does the necromancer pretend they can) by noting ominous dreams; but diseases possibly may. When dreams are very ugly, very horrifying, the sufferer, instead of looking out for a fall in the stocks, or the treachery of a friend, should take care of the stomach, and reform his diet accordingly. Fuseli, it is said, supped on raw pork (would not roast pork have sufficed?) before he painted the foul fiend.

Indigestion, both in its labour and its fatigue, is a prolific hag-mother of ugly dreams. So is any uncomfortable sensation, however slight it

may be; for, in the passive state of sleep, effects are produced disproportionate to causes. I have sometimes dreamt of being stung by a serpent, or having my fingers held tight by the teeth of a dog. On waking, I have invariably found some slight uneasiness or pain in the part which I had fancied so stung or squeezed. Or perhaps I was lying with my arm or hand pressed under me.

Another consideration that shows dreams to be coloured, according to the state of the stomach or head, is, that frequently a horrid dream turns off by degrees into a more pleasant one. I remember once going to bed after a later supper and more wine than I usually take. My first dreams were frightful. I imagined myself to be in some unknown country, arriving at a mysterious hotel. I was put to sleep in a mysterious room, which resembled the hall of an old castle. A statue clad in black armour stood at each of the four angles of the apartment. I was lying in a dim, shadowy bed, with a strong sense of the supernatural upon me, when suddenly I thought I saw the four figures in armour move on their pedestals. The sense of the supernatural now became in me horrifying and intense. A long time seemed to pass, during which I strained my eyes to see if the statues really did move. I was, by a sort of nightmare feeling, held motionless in the bed. Again the figures seemed to stir. This state of things continued during what appeared to me to be hours. I watched the statues in a fascinated manner. Suddenly the statues lifted their arms, then stepped down from their pedestals, and advanced towards me. I struggled to get up, but could only utter faint cries. I never, all this time, imagined the figures to be earthly. But now, a sudden change came over me. I felt loosed from my nightmare bonds, and, by a prodigious effort leaped out of bed. At the same moment a conviction seized me that the figures were men—robbers, perhaps, or enemies; but certainly flesh and blood. I rested on the thought that the whole thing was a trick to frighten me. Then I vigorously set to work to thrash the intruders all round (they, as usual in dreams, making no resistance), and kicked them out at the door in a most satisfactory manner. After this I awoke, and lay really awake for a short time, with no disagreeable impression left upon me. Again I fell asleep. I was still at the hotel, which was no longer mysterious, taking breakfast with some ladies, with whom I had formerly travelled. I was thinking of my supposed adventure in the statue-room, and came to the conclusion (with some difficulty) that I had dreamt it. Still, I wished to put the matter beyond doubt. So, the landlord just then entering, I asked him some question about the room. He, in real landlord fashion, began to prose in reference to my bedroom, excusing himself that it looked old and shabby, and, saying he meant to newly furnish it soon, I felt myself quite ashamed of my suspicions, and concluded I had dreamt the statues. Still, I wanted to be extra sure,

and requested that the landlord would take me to look at the apartment where I had slept. The landlord did go up with me to the room; and, when I saw it, the last lingering ideas about the supernatural or the tricky, disappeared from my mind. There were no pedestals in the room, certainly no statues, and the whole apartment, with its faded tester-bed, and its common-place aspect—for it had shrunk from the proportions of a baronial hall to those of a mere sleeping-room—looked so unfit for an adventure of any kind, that I laughed the inward laugh of Leather-stockings, to think I had ever been romantic about it. In this amused state of sensation I again woke. A third time I slept. The old dream was still dimly carried on, but, by the sole thread of the idea of travelling. I was on a pleasant tour; I was with the charming ladies; the haunted inn was left far behind, only remembered to be laughed at. Glimpses of many lands greeted me agreeably, and at half-past seven, my usual hour, I awoke with a feeling of mingled amusement and comfort.

This dream, or rather series of dreams, represents, I doubt not, the phases of sensation in many a sleeping human being, who lives, as we most of us live, rather too well, with a "rudis indigestaque moles" passing slowly off from our well-nourished stomachs at about four of the clock in the morning. There is, first, horror, then nightmare, then effort and exertion, which overcome nightmare; then alleviation, relief, yet still doubt, and what Wordsworth calls "some perplexity;" but, with the dawn, and with the passing of that worst of the small hours, when men die most, and (as the poet says) "Heaven's breath is coldest," comes true good sleep.

THE HAPPY FISHING-GROUNDS.

THERE has always been a charm to me about the fisherman's trade; a picturesque aspect, not only in those red-handed, heavy-booted, half-sailor-like dwellers upon the stony coast, who go slowly out in short, fat, bounding boats, to cast their brown wiry nets into the sea, but a rude poetry even about the sloppy fish-market of Lower Thames-street, with the steep and narrow City lanes that lead down to the loaded hoys, and end in a tangled web of rigging, masts, and cranes. Some portion of this bloom is thrown, to my fancy, over the old salt, small-windowed, yellow City oyster-shop; and it always seems to me that I have only to listen against the wall of such a place and hear the hissing of the sea, or to take up the floor of the little dry, fishy counting-house, and find the blue waves rolling and beating at my feet. The solid surroundings of such a storehouse melt silently away, and shadowy ancient mariners pass in and out. The din of the busy street is suddenly hushed, and I hear nothing but the roaring of the wind. The low black rafters, hung with striding forms of bat-like fish, press down on me no more, and nothing but the grey sky, or the blood-red sunset, is over my head. I see the dwarfed fishing village across the waves; the cobwebbed

lane of drying nets that winds down to the sands; and the sodden lobster-catches struggling between the sunken rocks. I hear the mellow tolling of the church bells in the little turret that peeps over the huts. I see even further, to a small harbour on the Normandy coast, where a high-capped fisherman's wife is helping her sons and her husband as they drag out their battered boat. She watches them leave the shelter of the little breakwater and plunge into the open sea; she looks anxiously at the black mountain of cloud that stretches, like a menacing angel, over the distant town; at the blinding columns of sand that come whirling along the old winding pier; and she drops in silent prayer before a weather-beaten crucifix that is raised upon a mound at the roadside.

With such day-dream visions as these, even in an old City oyster-shop, it is not to be wondered at that I have a passion, in all weathers, for dropping quietly down to the coast, and burying myself, for a time, in one of those hilly nooks, where none but boatmen and fishermen can be born, can live, and can die. The places that I love most are those where the "season-visitor" is almost, if not totally, unknown; where bathing-machines have never yet penetrated; where the stranger is truly a being of another world; and where the inhabitants believe, with a proud and simple faith, in the unequalled beauty and importance of their little scaly town. Many such places as these do I know, even within fifty miles of the Royal Exchange; and Whitstable, in Kent, the port of Canterbury, on the estuary of the Thames, is one of my especial favourites.

Many important towns, in many parts of England, exist upon one idea; and Whitstable, though not very important, is amongst the number. Its one idea is oysters. It is a town that may be called small, that may be considered well-to-do, that is thoroughly independent, and that dabbles a little in coals, because it has got a small muddy harbour and a single line of railway through the woods to Canterbury, but its best thoughts are devoted to oysters. Its aspect is not slightly, if looked at with an eye that delights in the stuccoed terraces and trim gravelled walks of a regular watering-place; for the line of its flat coast (which takes up one side of a bay formed by the Swale, a branch of the Medway) is occupied by squat wooden houses, made soot-black with pitch, the dwellers in which are sturdy freeholders, incorporated free-fishers, or oyster-dredgers, joined together by the ties of a common birthplace, by blood, by marriage, capital, and trade. It has always been their pride, from time out of mind, to live in these dwarfed huts on this stony beach, watching the happy fishing-grounds that lie under the brackish water in the bay, where millions of oysters are always breeding with marvellous fertility, and all for the incorporated company's good. How can the free-dredgers, and the whole town of Whitstable, help thinking of oysters, when so many oysters seem to be always thinking of them?

A primitive and curious joint-stock company it is; a joint-stock company whose shares are

unknown upon the Stock Exchange, because they are never in any market except Billingsgate market; a joint-stock company that may not be peculiar to Whitstable, but is peculiar, so it seems, to all happy fishing-grounds, where oysters are cultivated, and the capricious bounty of sea-faring nature is reduced to a mathematical certainty by the application of capital and laborious care. It was not formed by any active and calculating company-maker, whose office is in the city of London, whose profit is a percentage upon all capital raised, and whose ambition is a secretarial chair. It came together, in the dim old times, as a family compact, and a family compact it still remains. Its three hundred and forty odd members are all Whitstable men, or Whitstable widows and children. The stranger is never admitted to the rights and profits of a dredging-freeman, though the strange woman may be brought, by marriage, into the oyster tents, and may rear up sons who shall go forth and fish. The male infant is born, a young shareholder, in one of the low, pitch-black wooden houses on the beach; he is nursed to the tune of an oyster-dredging lullaby, to the howling of the wind, to the hissing of the surge. He staggers into the back parlour as soon as he can walk, and finds it a Robinson Crusoe's store-room, filled with canvas, coils of rope, old oars, nails, paint-pots, and parts of ships. He tumbles out of a door at the end, and down some steps, on to the pebbly shore, where he plays on the border of his happy fishing-ground, or clambers into a boat bearing his father's name, which lies high up on the beach, half filled with the skins of dead star-fish, with cockle-shells, and muddy crabs. As he grows older, he sees nothing to wonder at if a wooden staircase comes down from the top rooms of his father's house at the exterior of the side wall; and he thinks an old figure-head of Minerva, swept ashore, perhaps, from the wreck of some collier, an ornament for a parapet, superior to any statue that was ever hewn out of stone. His first budding geographical idea is that Billingsgate is the chief city of the world; as that is the only part of the great metropolis which comes into immediate and constant contact with his native town. He thinks that the handkerchief which his sister wears over her head and shoulders in summer, like a monk's cowl, or the shawl which she wears, for greater warmth, in the same way, in winter, the most elegant head-dress that was ever planned. The fact that Canterbury, a cathedral city, about seven miles off, has never adopted this head-dress, is nothing to him, for he knows that Whitstable men are perfect in matters of fish, and he gallantly considers that Whitstable women must consequently be perfect in matters of taste. He looks upon a crowd of fifty blue-woollen-shirted, heavy booted, oilskin-capped free-dredgers, standing in the Whitstable High-street (the one main street of the town), as something which a place called Cheapside has never yet matched for noise and bustle, even on its most busy days. He is aware that the South-Eastern Railway has long since joined his native

town to London, and that the North Kent Railway, with its continuations, has also advanced to within a single stage. As the produce, however, of his happy fishing-ground is never landed at all, being shipped in his old, round, soppy market hoys that are anchored in the bay, and conveyed to market direct by water (the cheapest way), he is not brought much in communication with the iron road, and he leaves it to the harbour traffic in coals and stone.

The free-dredger is thoroughly independent, not given to touch his hat to lord or squire; and if he does pay any mark of respect to the Duke of Cumberland, it is only as the sign of the dredgers' public-house, where the profits of the free company of oyster fishers are divided and paid. At fourteen years of age he may look with hope towards this old smoky tavern, and may enter as a fisherman's apprentice, to see his master paid; but at twenty-one he comes into his full birthright, his share in the myriads of oysters he has so long been thinking about, with all the claims and privileges that belong to the free-fishing state. He is then permitted to attend the "Water-Court" on the second Thursday in July. Here all the dredgers meet and vote by ballot, revise the by-laws, appoint the nine watchmen with three watching boats, the foreman of the ground, with his deputy, and twelve jurymen are chosen as the board of management for the year.

On this great day the whole town of Whitstable is hung with flags; and the sound of festivity is heard in the two principal taverns, and in the many small wooden drink-shops that are scattered along the shore. The inhabitants, who have long brooded over the oyster in the privacy of their homes, come forward now, and sacrifice publicly in its honour and praise. The young freemen are led into flirtations with maidens who are outside the incorporated dredgers' exclusive pale, and young brides are soon brought into the huts of the faithful, to gladden the hearts of the old freemen with the prospect of the company being preserved from decay. If a free-dredger dies without male issue, then his share becomes engulfed in the common stock, but his widow receives a certain reduced payment out of each day's fishing profits, up to the time of her death. The aged, infirm, and superannuated, about one fifth, are provided for in the same way, as well as those who are compelled, by temporary illness, to stop on shore. No one that has once been connected with the happy fishing-grounds is ever found begging for a loaf of bread.

The industrious little fleet consists of about eighty fishing-smacks, and fourteen market-hoys. The hoys are, of course, occupied in going to and coming from Billingsgate, but the fishing-boats are always moored in the bay, opposite the free dredging settlement of the town. During three days of the week these floating representatives of the happy fishers (each one named after its chief master, or the head of the family to which it belongs) are employed with the happy fishers themselves in what is called "dredging for

planting," and the general cultivation of the ground. Young oysters are caught and transferred to places where they will find the most nourishment; samples are drawn up, like wine out of a cask, inspected, specimens tasted, and the remainder returned to the sea. The natural enemies of the oyster are sifted out and destroyed—especially the poisonous star-fish, and the mysterious "borer." The former must be the old original regular oyster-eater, as it devours them without pepper, vinegar, bread-and-butter, or brown stout; while the latter—a creature like a periwinkle—stabs them to the heart, and leaves no sign but a few black specks upon the shell. The whole of this planting process is agricultural in its character; and it occupies about six hours on each of the three days. So important is it to the welfare of the happy fishing-ground, and so necessary is it not only to preserve the young oysters already distributed, but to import fresh life into the plantation, that last year (in 1858) the sum of fifteen thousand pounds was invested by the free company in a young oyster brood purchased from the coast of Essex.

The dredging for the London market, a task of about two hours' duration, is performed on the other three days of the week—generally on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. It is regulated by the two salesmen who represent that happy fishing-ground in the market of Lower Thames-street, and it is this regulation which prevents any violent fluctuations of price. The telegram received from these agents directs the number of bushels that are to be caught for market on each fishing day, and the catching of these bushels is work that is equally divided amongst all the effective members of the little oyster fleet. Each crew of three men goes off to its particular boat to dredge its particular "stint" (the number it is to catch), and it is not allowed to draw up more than its allotted portion.

The first step in oyster-dredging is to put on an armour of warm clothing in which it is extremely difficult for a novice to move or breathe. There are long worsted stockings to be drawn on over the trouser-legs; a pair of long, heavy, sewer-boots, reaching almost to the waist, to be forced on over these, a thick Guernsey shirt to be stretched over your body-coat, and an oilskin sou'-wester hat (like a dustman's) to be placed on your head. It is not easy to put on a Guernsey shirt without some care and practice, as the material is so highly elastic, that the arms are contracted to about the size of gun-bags, and the head hole is like the mouth of a stone bottle. As the whole fabric is struggled into from the bottom upwards, there is a short period when you are enveloped in total darkness, when you feel your mouth full of wool, the grip of some tight though soft binding substance across your nose, and a strong sense of the impossibility of getting your head out through the chimney-pot above. When you emerge, once more, into the daylight, you feel flushed and ruffled, and you know that it requires some physical force to pull down the blue strait-jacket-

like wrapper as far as your waist. In case of dirty weather, which is always provided for, you have a black, or yellow, salt, clammy oilskin overcoat thrown into your arms, which feels like the soddened skinny casing of some large fish.

About eight o'clock on a fresh October morning, the united company of free, happy family oyster-fishers, plunge heavily and slowly through the stones on the beach, and proceed, in a thoughtful and deliberate manner, to push off their boats, and row out to their little oyster fleet. They are all equal; they are all working together for good. The father meets his son, who is apprenticed out of the domestic circle—perhaps to a brother fisher next door but two; the nephew meets his uncle, the uncle meets his cousin, the cousin inquires after his aunt, who is laid up with the lumbago; the grandson lends a helping hand to his grandfather; the brother-in-law is in attendance upon his relations by marriage, and the whole scene is a picture of quiet, profitable, patriarchal trade. A dozen happy family shareholders will join to shoulder a rope, and pull off a barge-like boat that the tide has left high and dry. So confidentially do they lay their heads together to do this, that they look like a little open air board meeting held on the beach. Their whole movements seem to be regulated by a strong feeling that they have many centuries before them in which to do their work; and whatever accusation may be brought against them, there is no man who can say that he ever saw them in a hurry. They have lived amongst oysters, and thought of them so long, till, at last, it is possible to trace something of that steady, stationary shell-fish in their nature. They have fallen upon favourable ground where they fatten and thrive; they show no disposition to wander or move.

The ship to which we row off is a small yacht-like smack, of about fifteen tons burden. Its deck is almost flush with the bulwarks, and covered with baskets, buckets, and nets; its aspect is brown and yellow; and its flavour is as decidedly salt and fishy as that of a free-dredging oyster smack ought to be. When our grey sails are set we skim away from our inner coast moorings, through the little busy fleet, which, under all canvas, is already at work within the pole-marked bounds of the happy growing-ground, until we come to our proper anchorage, as settled by the foreman, the deputy, and the jury-board. The bright green hills of Kent, and the island of Sheppey, half circle us on the landscape. The blue salt water comes rolling in from the North Sea at the mouth of the bay; the thin, pale, fleecy, grey and golden clouds are flying over our heads; and the dull sound of boat-building hammers comes to us from the low black town.

Our nets are like fish—a thick trellis-work of undressed buffalo hide, washed almost white with repeated dipping; and the iron knife-like bar at the mouth is formed so as to scrape the oyster beds. They are dropped with their iron work, like small anchors; and, when they are hauled

in, there are shelly heaps in each net, numbering about eight hundred oysters. The haul is emptied on to the sippy deck, the nets are again cast over, and the happy dredgers stoop down in their tight thick costume, with very red faces and red hands, to begin the labour of sorting.

A few whelks have come up in the haul; a few strips of green glistening seaweed; a few cockles, whose kicking claws are hanging from their shells, as if they were struggling to crawl in out of the cold; a few snuff-coloured old oyster-shells, eaten through till they are like rusty rings; and a few muddy spider crabs, who run quickly from between the crevices of the little shelly hill. The oysters are of all sizes, in their different stages of growth. Some are like blocks of flint, a mass that, perhaps, numbers thirty nearly mature oyster lives. Some shells are covered with little pearly counters, the size of shillings, which represent a brood of infant oysters, all less than a year old. Some shells are ornamented with red-looking pimples, which the happy free-dredgers call "quats." Some oysters come up highly clean and perfect in their formation, but not much larger than half-a-crown. These are generally the two-year olds, and, with all the preceding varieties, they are pushed on one side by the dredger, while he picks out only the slightly fish of four years' growth, and casts them into his basket. His theory is that the oyster, if left alone, may live about ten years; and that it is extremely good eating at five years of age. He knows the five-year old oyster by the layers outside the bottom shell. The little perfect yellow circle at the small end of the fan represents one year; the three successive brown pearly semicircles represent three other years, and the rough fringe round the outer edge represents the one year more. He is satisfied with the four-year old oyster for general eating; and what he considers good the London market is compelled to take. His belief about the origin of the oyster is that the spawn, or "spat," as it is termed, will float, in the season of June and July (in this climate), upon the surface of the water until the sun has dried it into lumps. When these lumps reach a weight sufficient to sink, they fall to the bottom of the sea, where they find a bed which produces the nourishment they want. This is his natural history, and it is good enough for all practical ends.

When the sorting of the oysters is finished, and the baskets, which serve as measures, are filled with the picked fish, the refuse is swept back into the sea through trap-holes in the bulwarks. This latter process gives rise to reflections on the advantages of ugliness. It shows that an old oyster, with a repulsive exterior, may be pulled up many times in a general haul, but with the certainty that it will be returned to the water, to live there till it dies.

The loaded baskets, after being dipped in the bay, for the purpose of giving the oysters a

slight wash, are placed on one side, and the same work is gone through again, until the "stint" (or allotted number) is caught. The vessel shifts its moorings once or twice in the course of a single morning's dredge, in order that the hauls may be mixed, and that the taste of the metropolitan oyster-eater may not be spoiled by feeding upon one quality, and that quality, perhaps, the best. When the proper number of baskets are filled, they are placed in the boat belonging to the smack, and rowed to one of the market-hoys that are anchored amongst the fleet. Each one of these hoys is capable of receiving about one hundred bushels, or nearly one hundred and sixty thousand oysters; and fourteen of these vessels, as before stated, are constantly employed going to and fro in the Whitstable happy fishers carrying trade. The baskets are lifted out of the boat into the hands of the hoy sailors—a very fishy, patched, and sippy crew—and their separate hundred-weights of contents are tilted, like coals, into the long wet hold. A saddened inspector, who looks like a hoy captain, is kneeling on the deck, and watching through a pair of spectacles the descent of the quantity and quality at the same time. When the last smack has delivered its required load, the market-hoys turn their heads due Billingsgate; the fishing vessels are mopped up, are run to their coast moorings, and made tight for the night; and the happy fishers go on shore to dinner, the masters of their own time for the remainder of the day. Towards night they assemble at the "Duke of Cumberland" to hear and participate in the result of the last sale. The money is sent down by the two market salesmen in London, through the town agent of a Canterbury bank, and the sum is drawn out and divided by the managing jury of twelve. Their gains may fluctuate, being dependent upon profits, but it is generally found that if they want a pound on account, they know exactly where they can get it.

Without wishing to pry into free-dredging trade secrets, and overhaul the company's account-books, it is easy to see that they are not very hardly dealt with by nature and the metropolitan appetite, from certain signs that are not easily concealed. The joyous songs that come from the free-dredgers' chief tavern up to a late hour of the night, are not the sounds usually made by men who linger over an unsatisfactory pay table.

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